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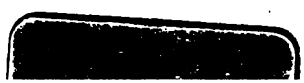

THE

DEMON 'OF SICILY.

A ROMANCE,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

EDWARD MONTAGUE ESQ.

Author of Legends of a Nursery, the Castle of Berry Pomeroy, &c. &c. &c.

Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd?
Bring'st with thee airs from Heaven, or blasts from Hell?
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

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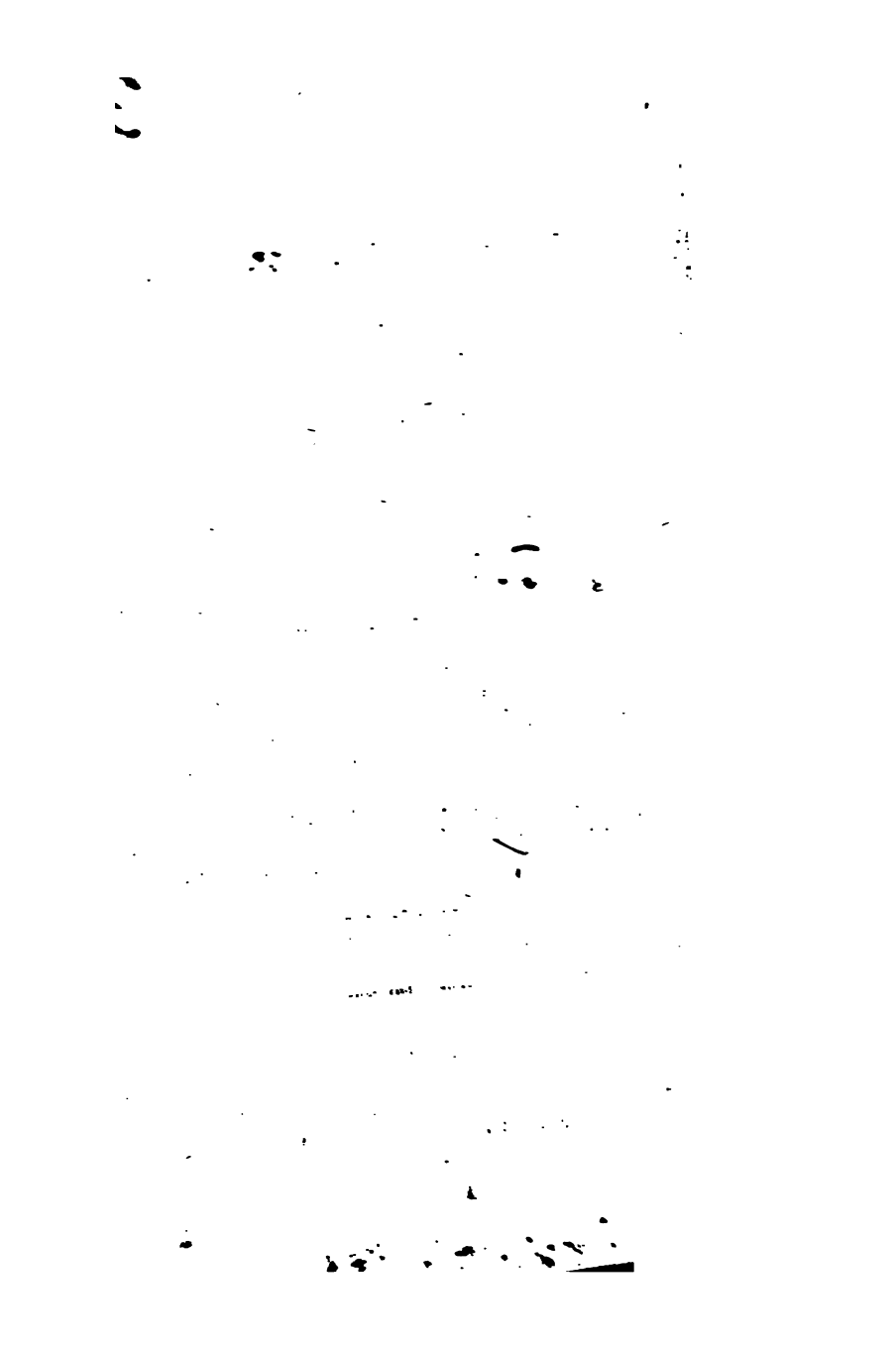

THE

DEMON OF SICILY.

CHAP. X.

DEATH with his restless sable pinions now hovered over the monastery of Santa Catherina; his intended victim was the venerable Abbot, who, now on the verge of immortality, was going to reap the reward of a well-spent life. Feeling the near approach of the relentless power who sooner or later pays his chilling visitation to all human beings, he signified his wish to be conveyed to the altar, that he might there breathe forth his last prayer while yet he retained the power of speech.

The great bell of the monastery announced to the inhabitants the situation of the Abbot, for on such an occasion only was it tolled; and the monks immediately arose to attend their superior, and supplicate by their prayers for the happy reception of his soul in the blissful regions of Paradise.

On this solemn occasion the Abbess, with her long train of nuns and boarders, entered with a slow and solemn pace into the chapel. Among them was Agatha, yet trembling with the terror she had endured of being discovered, and suffering the most dreadful despondency of mind, for even Hope, that consoler of the wretched, had fled far from her.

A strain of heavenly harmony now

floated on the air; the notes were plaintive; it was the service for the dying; it was a supplication to the Almighty to pardon the sins of the departing soul, and to permit its reception in the regions of eternal bliss.

The venerable Abbot lay in a litter on the marble steps of the high altar; on his breast was a crucifix, and in his now almost nerveless hand lay his rosary. His eyes, dim with the shades of death, were fixed on the statue of the Virgin; he regarded it with pleasure; he essayed to speak, but the powers of utterance were no more. His moving lips spoke him engaged in prayer; a slight tremor now seized his aged frame, and on the gale that bore the harmonious strains that then filled the chapel to the

heavens, ascended the spotless soul of the Abbot.

An awful pause succeeded, which was only interrupted by deep sighs; every one lamented the loss of the good Abbot, who for more than twenty years had presided over the monastery.

Again did the solemn harmony, which was increased by the tremulous tones of the afflicted monks, break on the melancholy silence; and when the service was concluded, the pale remains of the Abbot were borne back to his chamber, and the nuns retired from the awful scene.

Padre Ignazio succeeded to the elevated station of Abbot of Santa Catherina.

rina. He was a man of a stern and unbending disposition, of austere and repulsive manners, and the nuns and monks, in the various new regulations he subjected them to, found they had daily fresh cause to regret the mild sway of the late venerable Abbot.

Thus the situation of Agatha became every day more irksome. Formed as her ideas were for sensual and voluptuous gratifications, how miserable must be her life in the gloomy seclusions of a cloister.

Several nights she had passed in the chapel, but still no Ferdinando came; and at length she desisted from her nocturnal visits, and frequently in all the agonies of hopeless grief would

pace the narrow confines of her chamber, while the earth was under the silent dominion of night and sleep.

Days weeks, and months, rolled on, each minute of which witnessed the sorrows of Agatha. The festival of Santa Catherina was near approaching, and at that time she was to take the irrevocable vows of seclusion from the world.

One evening when the service in the chapel was nearly concluded, Agatha beheld the form of a man envelloped in a mantle approach the skreen; her heart beat with increasing agitation, and she fixed her gaze on him; when removing his cloak, she saw with the greatest delight the well-remembered countenance of Ferdinando. But his cheeks were no

longer

longer the abode of rosy health, they were pale and hollow, his eyes had lost all their fire, and his form was greatly emaciated.

Agatha turned pale on observing the change that had taken place in Ferdinando. She was, however, pleased with seeing him once more; and Hope, which had so long deserted her, again enlivened her heart with her cheering rays.

The service being concluded, the Abbess was returning to the convent, and Agatha lingered behind the train that she might attract the notice of Ferdinando: he knew her notwithstanding her veil; and as she was passing near the skreen, he took a paper from beneath his mantle and endeavoured to

throw it toward her; it however unfortunately fell at the feet of another nun, who immediately picked it up, and looking at Agatha, for whom she saw it was designed, put it into her bosom and walked on.

Words are inadequate to describe the feelings of Agatha and Ferdinando, who also witnessed the untoward circumstance; he retired hastily from the chapel, and Agatha continued in the train, though her agitation was so great as almost to deprive her of the power of motion.

It cannot be supposed that such a disposition as Agatha's could have procured her any friends in the convent; on the contrary, her haughty bearing

bearing caused her many enemies; and sister Marianne, who had so unfortunately picked up the packet destined for her, had great reason, amongst many others, to rejoice in having it in her power to draw on her the severe reproof and punishment which the superior would not fail to inflict when apprized of her actions.

The moment the Abbess had dismissed them, Marianne hastened to her chamber to peruse the contents of the letter; which she found to be as follows:—

"LOVELY AGATHA,

"Misfortunes crowding on each "other have hitherto pursued me; yet "do not imagine, beloved idol of my

 "heart,

"heart, that your sweet beauties have
"ever been absent from my memory.
"With gratitude do I remember that
"night which gave to my arms the only
"woman I can ever adore. To-night
"let me see you; let me again hold you
"to my heart, and consult with you on
"the subject of your release from the
"gloomy seclusion you have so long en-
"dured.

"FERDINANDO."

The nun shrunk with horror from the view of the epistle which disclosed such a sinful transaction, and determined to acquaint the abbess the next morning with Agatha's wicked deeds. She then devoutly crossed herself, and kneeling before her crucifix thanked the Saints

Saints for having preserved her from such deeds of horror.

Meantime dreadful were the sensations which agitated the bosom of Agatha; she was ignorant of the contents of the billet, and feared the worst that could befal her; namely, the exposition of the acts of that guilty night when she last saw Ferdinando, and her consequent punishment, which would probably extend to her life. She was not able to descend to the refectory that evening, but agitatedwith a chaos of distracting thoughts, remained in her chamber in an agony of mind which baffles description.

Weary at length with walking about, she threw herself into a seat, and giving

way to her sad ruminations and dreadful anticipations of what she would suffer on the morrow, the clock of the monastery unnoticed sounded the lengthening hours.

Favorable was the situation of Agatha's mind for the dreadful deeds which the Demon wished to make her perpetrate; and at that hour when he was permitted to visit the world he entered her chamber. Agatha started at beholding the tall figure of a monk stand before her, and she was on the point of uttering an exclamation of affright, when he thus addressed her:—

"Agatha, do not give way to needless alarm. Behold when you least expected it, but when you are most in need

need, a friend ready to assist you with such counsel as will ease you of your present fears and keep the knowledge of your crimes a secret."

"Father," replied the trembling Agatha, "such a friend is indeed invaluable. But say, how did you come to the knowledge of these acts which thou hast hinted at? Has Marianne disclosed her having received a paper intended for me?"

"Agatha, some time ago thou mayest recollect having received the key of the gate in the skeen. Call to thy remembrance the dream that attended that circumstance. Thou hast seen me before."

The nun trembled at the idea that

now arose to her mind that the person before her was a supernatural being. The Demon well knew her thoughts, and hasted to hinder her fears from protracting the time till he should be obliged to return to his chaotic abode of eternal horrors.

"Thou hast rightly thought, Agatha; I am a being possessed of great power, and though subject to Him who resides in the Heavens, yet numberless as the stars which glitter on its surface are the beings who bend before me. I took pity on you, I brought you the key, which from its situation you could never have obtained. You are now on the brink of danger, and I come to save you from the impending ruin that tot-

tering

tering at it base will soon overwhelm you."

"And can you indeed save me?" replied the delighted, astonished Agatha. "Ah! name the means—let me hear them, let me rejoice in my security, my sufferings have been dreadful; haste to relieve me of the insupportable burthen."

"It can only be effected; by the death of Marianne," replied the Demon.

Agatha started; pale horrors shook her frame, she had indeed been guilty of many sinful acts, but murder was new to her.

"Is there no other way," said she as

as soon as she was able to speak, "to save me than by her death? Dreadful thought! I cannot reconcile myself to be accessary to such a deed."

"And where is the harm," said the Demon with a malicious smile; "in the exposition that she will make to the abbess to-morrow will not Marianne seek your life? If attacked by your own species, is there any harm, think you, in saving yourself by their destruction? Self-preservation is the first law of Nature, and in terminating the existence of Marianne you do but obey its dictates."

Agatha shook her head; she was still irresolute.

"Listen

"Listen thou to your fate," said the Demon. "By this time to-morrow you will be confined in a dungeon far beneath the surface of the earth, the abode of loathsome animals and fœtid vapours; there chained to the earth in utter darkness, you will be barely kept alive by bread black and mouldy, and water taken from the green mantled pool: Soon your shrunken form will shew the bones ready to start from beneath their enclosure; but you will still cling to existence, and will languish many a month in the endurance of all the torturous sensations that ever found a place in the minds of mortals. And when at length the last gasp of breath has departed your skeleton form, your bones will become the sport of venemous reptiles,

and

and in your hollow skull will the viper and toad reside."

This speech had no sooner passed the lips of the Demon than Agatha, overcome by the dreadful picture he had drawn of her sufferings, determined to commit any deed, however horrible, rather than subject herself to them.

"You have pervailed," said she to the Demon in a tremulous tone; "but how shall Marianne die without incuring suspicion?"

The Demon was pleased to find Agatha willing to commit the crime of murder, than which nothing could afford him such real pleasure; his joy at beholding the murderer in the commission

sion of that act still was as great as when for the first time he saw the earth stained with blood, and the smoke of it ascending to Heaven in damning evidence against the homicide.

" Sister Ursula," he replied, " is skilled in medicinal knowledge; the chamber next to her is appropriated to the purpose of containing the various inventions of the laboratory; repair there this night, and in the corner at the right side you will see a green phial; its contents are of such a nature as will instantly arrest the vital powers; the blood will cease to circulate, and hang curdled in the veins: a small portion will be sufficient for your purpose, and when at the morning repast contrive to mix it with the drink of Marianne; you will then

then be secure. The billet of Ferdinando you must however be careful to possess yourself of; you will find it in her bosom; you will see him on the following night. Be resolute, or you will endure the horrid torments I have but now foretold you of."

This said, the Demon, satisfied that he had sufficiently persuaded the hapless Agatha to the commission of the horrible act, suddenly receded from her sight, and in an instant of time was at the entrance of the straights which connect the Mediteranean and Atlantic oceans, where he stirred up the bloody-minded Moors to murder and unheard of acts of barbarous revenge against each other. Seated on the highest pinnacle of the aspiring rock of Gibraltar he

he glutted his pleased sight with the dreadful scenes produced by him and his infernal agents.

Agatha, when she saw the misty form vanish from her sight, sunk almost insensible into her chair, where she long remained enduring those agonies which disturb the mind between the resolution of performing and the perpetration of deeds of blood and horror. She found that either Marianne or herself must perish. Struck with this truth she at length arose, and taking her dim untrimmed lamp found out the chamber described by the Demon. The door was not fastened; she entered and looking around saw the fatal phial; a sudden chill pervaded her frame as she stretched out her arm and took it down,

her

her countenance was blanched with her internal agitations, and she hastily left the chamber, and entering her own sat down, to recover if possible from the horrors she endured.

The rosy-fingered morn, unconscious of the dark crimes that would sully the day she was now producing to the world, brightly gleamed in the eastern horizon with streaks of golden hue; the light and airy clouds that here and there floated in the vast ethereal expanse soon were irradiated with the bright rays of the glowing luminary of Heaven, who rising above the covert of the mountains, threw his broad beams over the gladdened face of Nature.

The convent bell now tolled for matin

matin prayer: every stroke of the ponderous hammer sadly reverberated on the soul of Agatha; she looked on them as the funeral knell of Marianne; she however endeavoured to dismiss sensations which would incapacitate her for what she was going to perform.

She took the phial, and concealing it in the folds of her garments, left her chamber, and descended to the chapel, while busy fancy made her suppose every eye fixed on her as seeing the dark intents of her soul.

Marianne and Agatha mutually endeavoured to avoid each other; Marianne from the horror she had conceived of the guilty acts of Agatha, and she from the force of sensations occasioned

by

by her dreadful designs against the existence of the nun.

The service being concluded, it now approached the moment of action. The nuns were assembling in the refectory, when Agatha, pressing forward, contrived, as she passed by the seat of Marianne, to pour some of the contents of the phial into the glass which contained her beverage. As the nuns had not taken their places at the table, she was unobserved, and she soon after beheld her victim drink the fatal draught.

In the course of a short space of time the effect took place; Marianne complained of being unwell, and soon after fell senseless on the floor. Agatha hastily ran to assist her, and contrived

during

during the confusion to take away the billet of Ferdinando, which she found in her bosom, according to the information she had received from the Demon.

Marianne was now carried to her chamber, where every exertion was made by sister Ursula to recover her; but no motion, no feeble pulsation gave proof that the breath of life yet lingered in her pale form, and preparations were made for her interment in the convent cemetery.

Claudina, a nun of Santa Catherina, was the bosom-friend of the unfortunate Marianne. She wept unceasingly for her loss, nor could she be prevailed on to quit for a moment the pallid remains.

When the sable investiture of night descended from the heavens, Marianne was borne to the gloomy regions of death. Sobs and tears bespoke the feelings of the sisterhood, but Claudina in silent anguish beheld the earth heaped over the friend of her heart.

Conscience, how deeply didst thou dart into the panting bosom of Agatha thy torturous sting; no herb, no power is there in medicine to allay the fever of the mind. Often did her senses appear ready to desert her, but the fears of being discovered alone made her able to support the trying moment. When the remains of Marianne were laid in the cold bosom of the tomb, gladly she retired from the sad scene, and hastening to her chamber, sought, by thinking of her

her present security, to calm the emotions which tormented her.

She had perused the billet of Ferdinando, and sighed to think that he had in vain waited for her the past night; conceiving, however, that it was probable he would enter the chapel that night, she determined to go there and attend his arrival, which would serve to relieve her mind from the anguish it endured; and she hoped too that she should soon be far from the convent, which was now become insupportable to her.

Claudina remained in the cemetery; seased on the grave of Mariænne, she poured forth the sorrows of her heart.

" Beloved friend," said she, " how

great is the distance between our souls, which once vibrated with delight at the sound of each others voice. No more shall I enjoy the dear pleasure of seeing you; no more hear those accents, those declarations of friendship, so sincere, so disinterested. Oh, Marianne! you, you are alive to happiness; 'tis I that am dead to comfort, to all that can make existence supportable. Did I not know that your pure soul is now in the presence of its Creator, and insensate to the griefs of Claudina, I should call it unkind that it did not assume the earthly form which once pleased my delighted gaze, and hover over me, to give me some consolation, to inspire me with fortitude to bear thy loss."

Here floods of tears rendered Claudina

dina incapable of speech; the lamp, which she placed near her on the earth became every minute more dim, its weak rays now glanced on the nearest hillocks beneath which rested the mouldering remains of the nuns of Santa Catherina. Suddenly the powers of speech and of recollection were renewed, and Claudina exclaimed:

"Yes; it was the morning of this day, when Nature awoke to fresh animation, that Mariánne was alive. She greeted me in her usual manner, embraced me as she was wont to do. What a change! Beneath this new-raised earth, in the cold womb of the tomb, she now lies, her form is for ever hid from my view. To-morrow will come, and I shall, not see her; days, months, and years will

roll on, but they will not bring Marianne to me."

Thus mourned the disconsolate Claudina, her tears frequently interrupting her sad speech; at length she sunk insensible on the grave, and in that state continued some hours; but when the returning powers of animation enabled her to arise, she took up her lamp, and turning her tearful gaze on the grave, sighed deeply; and slowly leaving the cemetery, passed through the chapel to her chamber in the convent.

It was at the moment she sighed that the monk Bernardo had effected an entrance, for purposes known only to himself, into the cemetery of the convent, and it was her figure which had so greatly

greatly alarmed him as to make him abandon his evil projects.

Agatha, after the interment of Marianne, had immediately proceeded to her chamber, where she remained till it was near midnight, the time that Ferdinando usually arrived in the chapel; she then went to the gate, where she found him waiting.

" Dearest Agatha," said he, " at last am I blest with your presence. Great as have been my sufferings since I saw you, the sweet pleasure I enjoy this moment overpays me; but what did I not endure when I beheld the failure of the billet I endeavoured to throw toward you. Tell me, dearest Agatha, was it

perused by the nun, or did you contrive to get it from her?"

The countenance of Agatha was as the lily cut down by the bleak blast of night; a deadly paleness overspread her features, she trembled, and was silent, for she reflected that but a short time before she had seen that hapless nun laid in the silent grave.

Ferdinando beheld her emotions; he knew not what to ascribe them to; he hasted to support her, for she seemed sinking on the marble floor of the chapel, while her eyes rolled about with the wild unsettled gaze of delirium.

"I got it from her," she replied at length

length in a low voice, rendered almost inarticulate by the inexpressible emotions of her breast; " question me no further about it. Was I not advised to do it? Yes. I am safe; she cannot betray me —her voice is silent. . . . . Hark! did I not hear her? See! see! her pale form now flits before me, half veiled in the shades of night."

" Agatha, my love," said Ferdinando, " recollect yourself. Your senses wander. Why do you thus wildly roll your eyes about, and utter such unconnected sentences?"

Agatha now began to rouse herself from the horrible imaginings of a guilty conscience, and fearing that the dreadful secret of her heart had escaped her in the

the distracted ravings of the moment, she endeavoured to recover herself, and to learn whether Ferdinando had come to the knowledge of the deed which the Demon of darkness had stirred her up to perform.

She soon, however, was convinced that he was as yet ignorant of the extent of her guilt; and as soon as she was able, she endeavoured to account for the great perturbation of her mind, alledging as a reason the affliction she had endured at his long absence, and the consequent total failure of her hopes of escaping from her detested situation.

Ferdinando endeavoured to comfort her: he drew her toward him, and tenderly embracing her, renewed his protestations

testations of love for her, and his intention of effecting her escape. "But at present, dear Agatha," said he, "from the very weak state of my almost exhausted frame, you will yourself easily judge it impossible for me to be able to undertake so important a circumstance, which will call forth every exertion; for, to elude the pursuit that would instantly take place, we must travel many hours ere security will await us. An opportunity which is likely to be a favourable one will, I understand, soon occur. At the approaching festival, occupied with the pomp and pageantry of the ceremonies, your absence will not be known for some time, and the number of people who will be travelling on the roads will make us the less noticed.—Tomorrow night, dearest Agatha," continued

tinued he, "I will come again at an early hour, and relate to you the adventures which have detained me so long from the sweet idol of my heart." This said he took his leave, and Agatha in the expectation of her release, and of enjoying the pleasures of the world, retired to her pallet, where, however, her rest was soon disturbed, for the bell of the convent summoned its inhabitants to witness an unexpected and almost unheard-of circumstance.

The powers of life had been only suspended in the bosom of Marianne by the mixture she had taken, for Agatha, owing to her fears of being observed, had poured so small a quantity of the contents of her phial into her beverage, *that, although* it affected her in the

manner

manner described, and she appeared to the nurse as if dead, yet the vital spark was not extinct; and when time had robbed the poison of some of its potency, blood began slowly to circulate through her veins, and her heart to resume its motion. But what was her horror when her senses returned to find herself inclosed in the narrow bounds of a coffin, and that, her respiration becoming every moment more difficult, she must perish. It was at this awful instant that, exerting herself, she gave utterance to those words, which the Padre Bernardo hearing, (as the reader is already informed in the fifth chapter of these records) released her from the opened jaws of destruction.

When *she was able* to stand, the monk led

led her to the chapel; and, leaving her seated on the steps of the altar, he departed. Marianne, however, staid not long there; exerting her yet remaining strength, she slowly proceeded toward the well-known apartment of the sorrowing Claudina.—She entered the chamber; all was still; Claudina had just before closed her aching eyes, and a disturbed slumber lay lightly on her grieved senses.

"Claudina!" tremblingly uttered Marianne as, fainting with excess of bodily anguish, for the poison had not lost all its power, she sunk insensible on her couch.

The sound of her voice awakened *Claudina*. She started up, and looked around

around her, but all was enveloped in the shady mantle of night, for the pale moon was obscured by a cloud which was borne on the gentle zephyrs of the approaching morn.

Claudina now became sensible that something heavy was lying at the foot of her couch; she hastily arose, and, laying her hand upon it, found that it was the form of a woman. Her astonishment increased, and she stood for some minutes unable to move, when all her faculties were bound up in horror, for she again heard her name faintly pronounced, and the tone of the voice was that of Marianne.

The idea that the departed spirit of her *friend* was now hovering about her,

the form recumbent on the couch, and the gloomy darkness that prevailed in the chamber, affected the senses of Claudina to such a degree that with a wild shriek of affright she essayed to leave the apartment; but being unable to find the door, and to bear up against the panic that had seized her mind, she fainted, and fell on the floor.

Her scream awoke some of the sisters whose chambers were contiguous to hers, who, wishing to know the cause of it, procured a light, and entering her chamber beheld Claudina lying on the flooor, and the pallid form of Marianne in the dreary habiliments of the grave sitting on the couch.

Affrighted at the sight they rushed

out

out of the chamber, and immediately went to the door of the apartment of the Abbess, whom they acquainted with what they had witnessed with the addition of a multitude of fear-formed exaggerations.

The Abbess ordering the convent bell to be tolled to call up its inhabitants, prepared to investigate the truth of the incredible reports of the nuns, and soon proceeded, attended by them, to the chamber of Claudina.

To describe the horror, the astonishment, and the fears of Agatha when she beheld her victim returned from the grave, would far exceed the limited powers of the pen ; her only consolation was that Marianne seemed almost un-

able

able to speak, and that she had not the hand writing of Ferdinando to produce as a positive evidence of what she might make known to the Abbess of her guilty deeds.

Claudina by the attentive care of sister Ursula was at length brought to her recollection, and during the time that she remained in a state of insensibility the Abbess put several questions to the almost inanimate Marianne; her answers, however, were such as served to increase the astonishment of the Abbess, and the mysterious silence which she observed as to the way in which she was liberaied from the grave incensed her, and she determined to acquaint Padre Ignazio the abbot, with her conduct, in the hopes that he might

might be able to wrest the secret from her. All however he could obtain was, that she was bound by an oath not to reveal that circumstance.

Anxious to be acquainted with the whole of this most unaccountable transaction, the Abbot, in order completely to do away all objections on the part of the nun, sent to the Pope a detail of these strange events, and requested that he would absolve the nun from her oath.

Agatha meanwhile remained in her chamber, a prey to the liveliest sensations of terror; every noise, every step she heard, alarmed her, lest it should be occasioned by the bearer of an order from the Abbess to appear before

her

her. Marianne, however, was too ill to enter on the subject of her suspicions, and Agatha determined if possible to prevent he from ever doing so.

She examined the phial, and seeing how small a part of its contents were gone, easily divined the reason of the reanimation of the nun. She put the fatal mixture in the folds of her garment, and leaving her chamber anxiously looked for an opportunity of administering a second potion to Marianne.

It was then evening, the dusky livery of approaching night prevented the agitation that resided in the countenance of Marianne being observed; she

she was walking about the refectory when an unexpected opportunity offered of putting her evil design into execution, for Ursula requested her to carry to Marianne's chamber a medicine she had prepared in order to assuage the violent pains that hapless nun complained of.

Agatha hastily took the vessel from the hands of Ursula, and when she had left the refectory immediately poured into it as much of the contents of the phial as she thought would quiet all her fears of being discovered, if Marianne had not already divulged what she knew of her.

Still however conscience slept not,

and

and the agitation of her mind became so great when she had poisoned the drink that was prepared for Marianne, that she was obliged to lean against the side of the corridore, in order to support her trembling frame.

One of the nuns coming by, demanded if she was unwell, and Agatha replying in the affirmative, she took the vessel from her hand, and carried it herself to Marianne.

Claudina, from the moment that she had recovered, had remained with her loved friend, and sitting by the side of her couch watched over her with the tenderest anxiety.

When the nun entered with the fatal mixture

mixture, Claudina took it from her and gave it to Marianne, who drank deeply of the deadly draught.

In all probability the medicine which Ursula had prepared was of such a nature as to prevent the sudden effects of the poison, for it was not till near midnight that the watchful Claudina seeing the symptoms of approaching dissolution in the convulsed features of Marianne, sent to acquaint the Abbess therewith, who directed the passing bell to be tolled, and proceeded to the chapel with the nuns and boarders, where the service was performed for the dying.

Agatha was amongst the number; but she had now steeled her bosom against all sensations of pity, and black

and horrible were the emotions of her soul; but guilt is never free from alarm, and when the death of Marianne was announced, still Agatha feared that she had disclosed her deeds either to the Abbess or Claudina.

Miserable indeed was that hapless nun, and alive only to grief, she held for a long period in her embrace the cold body of Marianne; and when at length she was with difficulty separated from it, became so long insensible that her soul seemed to have joined that of her loved friend in its passage to regions of eternal happiness.

Agatha waited impatiently for the hour when she might expect to see Ferdinando. She felt curious to know what

what had been the circumstances which had so long detained him from carrying into effect her much wished emancipation, and at the time when she might expect him in the chapel she left her apartment.

She had not, however, proceeded more than half way down the flight of stairs when she observed one of the nuns who attended on Claudina on the point of ascending them, having been to procure some medicine for that unfortunate friend of the deceased Marianne.

Alarmed lest she should be discovered to be up at that time of night, Agatha instantly extinguished her lamp, and turning back hastened along the corridore in which was the door of her

apartment; she was, however, fearful of entering it, lest the nun might observe her, but continued along the passage, and turning to the right when she had arrived at the extremity stopped to listen if the nun was coming that way. Presently the light of her lamp flashed on the opposite wall, and Agatha, confused and hardly conscious of what she was doing, gently pushed open a door near which she stood, and entering a chamber closed it, and there waited till the nun should pass by. Soon she was delivered from her fears, for the nun hastened on, and the echo of her steps grew every moment more indistinct.

Agatha then ventured to look around her. The moon darting through the

casement

casement her silver beams, which shone full on a pallet, disclosed to the distended eye-balls of Agatha, which almost deserted their sockets, the wan corpse of Marianne.

Dreadful Deity of retribution, what sight was this for the murderess. Who shall pretend to describe the sensations of agony, remorse, and horror, which thou thinkest proper to inflict on the guilty? Vain and presumptuous must be such efforts. The body of Agatha shook with the dreadful workings of her mind; chaos on chaos of miseries raged in horrible tumult in her breast; she tried to close her eyes, but her efforts were in vain; she essayed to cover them with her hands, but she possessed

not sufficient strength to raise them to her face.

In this awful situation she thought she heard a voice say, "Agatha, the multitude of thy crimes begins to overtop the brink of the huge measure; view the stiff corse which but for thee had yet inhaled the breath of life, the gift of the Almighty torn from it by thy accursed deeds. Thy name appears frequent in the dreadful register of the accusing angel; endeavour to blot out some of thy guilty acts by future days of repentance; remember how short, how uncertain is thy existence, and that perhaps between thee and a dreadful immortality only a few hours, nay, moments may intervene. The blood

of

of thy pale victim is now crying aloud for that vengeance which is its due!"

Agatha either heard, or her guilty imagination made her conceive she heard, these words. By an effort of desperation she acquired sufficient strength to open the door, and as fast as her terrors would permit her, moved along the passage; but before she could bring her mind to the least knowledge of the actions of her trembling frame, she had proceeded into the chapel, where her senses, unable to sustain the warring horrors of her bosom, deserted her, and she sank down by the grate insensate to the torments of conscience and never-ending remorse.

CHAP. XI.

Nothing of moment sufficient to deserve a place in these records occurred in the family of the Marchese de Carlentini for some years, the little Angellina daily improved in beauty; she possessed the united graces of her parents, and promised to be a pattern of loveliness both in her mind as well as person. The Conte Angello had a daughter a few years older than Angellina, called Laurentina, who became a visitor at the Castello in consequence of the Conte who was a widower, being obliged to take

take a journey to Naples on business of moment.

Far different was the disposition of Laurentina from that of the lovely Angellina, owing perhaps to the want of the attentive care of maternal affection. Her passions oft-times overcame her reason; the Marchesa saw and endeavoured to check as much as was in her power her intemperate disposition, but in vain; her bad habits had taken deep root in her mind, and finally became a part of herself. She sighed for the pleasures of the world. She longed to see crowds of prostrate adorers offering up the tributary incense which she conceived was due to her charms. As yet, however, her thoughts had only

strayed, her actions had not been swayed by them.

Many of the young Sicilian nobility frequented the Castello de Carlentini, but none of them was more indebted to Nature for a prepossessing exterior than the Count Cavini; he saw, and seeing, admired the attractive charms of Laurentina; he knew well the various sensations that existed in the mind of that Signora, for he had ever been an attentive observer of the human heart; he saw that the language of flattery was pleasing to her ears, and with the assistance of that powerful nurse, lulled to sleep the few principles of rectitude which yet bore some sway in her bosom.

The syren voice of adulation, the tremor

mor of affected love, the deceptive tale of sufferings which Cavini well knew how to employ to advantage, aided too by his graceful external appearance, sunk deep into the heart of Laurentina. When the sun illumined the earth, or when the veil of night overshadowed the creation, his image was present in her imagination, and the dulcet expressions of his adoration and love lived in her pleased remembrance.

Such was the dangerous situation of Laurentina, when the dark regent of the bottomless abyss commissioned one of his infernal agents to hover over her, and with delusive dreams to heat her imagination till her ideas, vitiated by them, should be such as would suit with the wicked deeds which to seduce un-

wary mortals to perpetrate, constituted his greatest happiness.

Oh ! woman, lovely woman last formed of animated beings, the master-piece of the whole, when the divine artist crowned his work with producing thee, he did indeed shew the magnitude of his power ; Man, solitary and unhappy felt the want of thy cheering converse ee'r yet his tongue could find expressions for the wishes of his bosom, and the divinity to make him truly happy then created thee to be his comfort in affliction, to partake of his joys, to live in the bosom of his affections, to be to him an adored self. Man, whom he destined to hold the sovereign sway, he endued with greater strength of mind *to bear* up against the various ills of

life. He meant him to be as the elm, and the woman as the clustering vine, which embraces and ornaments with her leafy arms her stately support; thus she needed not that firmness of mind which is the characteristic of man; and this want well knows the Demon, who too often takes a fatal advantage of it.

Unhappy sex, your beauty, your charms, expose you to the snares of man who basely profits by your too great credulity and reliance on his deceitful asseverations of love and constancy; surely if you act wrong the crime originates with him.

Listen not, then, to the alluring voice of flattery for know that no greater

charm exists than the possession of virtue; respect, esteem, pure unsophisticated love, is the result.

Cavini had been breathing the soft tale in the attentive ears of Laurentina while wandering in the umbrageous recesses of the grove near the Castello, when at length the moon, rising in resplendent majesty over the waving summits of the tall trees, warned her to return, lest notice should be taken of her long absence.

At the portals of the North Hall she parted with her lover, who kneeling on the marble steps gracefully kissed her lily hand, and took his leave, after having entreated that she would favor him with

with an interview in the same place the next evening, which, with averted face and mantling blushes, she granted.

She passed through the hall, and from thence to her chamber, her thoughts full of the tender expressions of Cavini, and her bosom full of love for him.

She retired to repose, a ready slumber closed her eyes caused by the powerful arts of the agent of the Demon in obedience to his will, who taking on himself the form of a being in the first bloom of youth, attired in radiant vestments of celestial blue, appeared to her in a dream.

"Sleepest thou, fair maid?" said the spirit; "dost thou close up those radiant

diant eyes in slumbers which delight the admiring world? the glorious orb of night gazes enamoured on thy beauties, myself, while I look on them, cannot but acknowledge their pre-eminence even over the bright host of heaven. Love, fair maid, has bound in his golden toils thy tender heart, it pants after unknown enjoyments, why delay to indulge in those dear gratifications which Nature, anxious to fulfil great and wise purposes, has deeply implanted a wish for in the breasts of mortals—Cavini loves thee, his happiness is dependent on thee, and wilt thou refuse to make him a return for his tender affection? Perish the frigid dictates of mundane laws! let Love, almighty love, be the guide of thy actions; 'tis Nature commands you to love, and she will be obeyed—Too often

in the formal tie of marriage the sweet emotions of the soul, the ineffable delights of existence the charms of love are for ever lost—risque not then the future happiness of thy life on so uncertain a foundation; follow the flowery courses of Pleasure's votaries, and taste of all the delights of the world while thy youth and peerless beauty enable thee so to do."

With such artful converse did the Spirit address the sleeping Laurentina—His words sunk deep in her remembrance—and now she thought herself reclined by the side of the elegant Cavini on a bank of fresh-blown roses—Cavini slumbered—the glow of health rested on his manly cheek, his lips appeared like two opening rose-buds when they

unfold

unfold their beauties to the morning sun. Laurentina in thought hung over him enamoured; she felt his palpitating heart, and inhaled his breath; her lips touched his, and, with the strength of the new-born sensation of her bosom she awoke—

The Spirit succeeded in his mission; Laurentina slumbered no more that night, her thoughts were entirely occupied by her dreams, and the tumult of unruly passions raged in her breast.

Thus it is when the Demon of darkness sees that virtue is fading in the breasts of mortals that he endeavours by his infernal arts and specious arguments to delude the unwary till his dark *purposes* are accomplished. In proportion

tion as the mind grows weak in virtue, he strengthens the vicious habits, till finally they predominate with a despotic sway over the heart.

Knowing then the watchful sentinel we have over our actions, how careful should we be to exclude with persevering vigilance all thoughts derogatory to the self-approving principles of a virtuous mind.

With anxious expectancy did Laurentina await the hour of appointment with the fascinating Conte. The moon rose with a pallid face in the East, while the declining rays of the sun ceased to illumine the valleys, and soon sunk from the view beneath the bosom of the western waters. It was then that Laurentina

descended

descended from her apartment, and leaving the Castello, directed her steps to the shady recesses of the grove, where Cavini waited in expectation of her arrival.

The musical notes of the feathered creation had ceased; in their downy nests they sunk to rest, and dreamt of the blythe carols of the past day; the moon in all her silver majesty brightly rolled along the heavens. It was an Evening suited to the pleasing reveries of silent solemn meditation. It was an evening too, which, lulling the senses by the tranquillity that exists around, leaves them in a state to receive the fond tale of love, and to believe the impassioned expressions of its seducing language.

Cavini hastened to meet the beautiful Laurentina,

Laurentina and in elegant terms expressed his gratitude for her condescension.

" Lovely Laurentina," said he " since I saw you time seems to have slept. When I parted from you last evening, I sought again that seat where I had the bliss of telling you how greatly how foundly I adore you. Alas! the melody of thy voice no longer sounded in my ravished ears; silence reigned around; the streams flowed on in its devious course unconscious of my sighs, which increasing proceeded from that bosom so fondly devoted to thee."

Such was the language of Cavini, and to which Laurentina listened with delight. He led her to the banks of the stream; the glittering radiance of the

moon-beams played on its undulating waters. Resting on a mossy seat he spoke of his passion, he kissed her hand which now trembled in his, she remembered her dream; well had the evil spirit performed the commission of the Demon. Her eyes melted in soft languor—she breathed slowly a sigh—she looked at Cavini—his dark eyes irradiated with the fire of love were fixed on her interesting countenance. The emotions she had felt in the vision of the past night again recurred to her bosom!!.... All around was favorable to raise the tender sensations of her heart. The soft light of the moon displayed in perhaps a more alluring view the seducing features of Cavini. The gentle vibration of the branches of the surrounding trees discovered and concealed at intervals

tervals the animation of his eyes, fixed on her in all the tender adoration of love, mingled with the fire of unruly longings. The delicious fragrance of the wild flowers which thickly adorned the banks of the stream was exhaled around on the wings of the gentle zephyr, and now the melodious nightingale broke on the silence which reigned in the aerial regions with her voluptuous notes, and seemed to invite the animated creation to the enjoyments of love.

Cavini saw how favorable was the present moment; he looked entreatingly on Laurentina. She was silent, and returned his gaze—he took her hand, and advancing nearer, pressed his lips to hers.....

Her

Her dream was thus realized; and the sensation of the moment were beyond utterance— Cavini triumphed and Laurentina was undone.—

Such is the language of the world. Cruel triumph! but it was not Cavini that triumphed! it was the Demon, who beheld the success of his schemes, and rejoiced in the sway he held over the heart of the Conte, who had confessed it by the commission of a crime which leads into all the horrible mazes of vice, the unfortunate unthinking female.

The wild inhabitants of the forest prey not on their own species, man alone who is endued with reason, and reflection,

flection marks out his own kind for destruction.

Prudence obliged the lovers to notice the movements of time, they at length seperated and Laurentina retired to her chamber, " to think on what was past and sigh alone. "

Those satisfactory reflections with which conscience disturbs the rest of the guilty, were however soon banished her bosom. She soon ceased to regret the loss of her honor, and anticipated the delight atlendant on her next meeting with Cavini.

The sensations of Cavini after his successful attempts on the honor of Laurentina were such as exist in the

bosom

bosom of the libertine. It was now no longer in her power to give him pleasure; the moment of gratification was past, his bosom was incapable of love, it was only a base lustful passion that occupied his breast; even that had now forsaken it, and he thought no more of the female who had given to him the greatest proof how much she loved, by confiding to his keeping that invaluable jewel her honor.

This fatal truth Laurentina had to experience; Cavini's conduct was no longer the same, his attentions to her became evidently forced; till at length he left her.

Laurentina, who really loved him was almost inconsolable; frequently did she

at

midnight, when every eye was closed, pace the long corridores and halls of the Castello, and sigh forth the name of her faithless lover, while tears of bitter agony coursed each other down her pallid cheek.

Her pride, however, at length enabled her to surmount the grief of her bosom; and perhaps too the attentions of the Signor Marino contributed not a little to compose its perturbation; she listened to his protestations of love, and Cavini was forgot.

Meantime the youthful Angelina advanced in years, beauty, and accomplishments; the Marchese beheld her with delight, and the amiable Louisa, her mother, neglected nothing that could

tend to enlarge her ideas and increase her love for virtue. The Count de Leoni, whose health, owing to his former dissipated life, had long been in a precarious state, at this time ceased to exist; by his will Ricardo became possessed of his estates, and in consequence he now found himself enabled to live in a style suited to his rank, and to make on his Angelina a settlement which would not be rejected by the first nobility of the kingdom of Sicily. Happiness seemed now to have made the Castello de Carlentini her fixed abode; eighteen years had witnessed the domestic comfort of Ricardo and his amiable Louisa; their lovely daughter Angelina had completed her sixteenth year, rich in virtue, beauty, and every accomplishment that adorns the female.

But

But the days of the Marchese were numbered; the Angel of Death sent that dread summons which man cannot disobey, and Ricardo patiently submitted to the awful moment which consigned to eternity the divine spark of immortality, which flew on the glad pinions of delight to adore its Maker.

Louisa had watched with unceasing solicitude the sick couch of her fond husband, every sigh that pain or the thought of leaving her forced from his bosom, was ecchoed by one from Louisa. Long did she cherish the fond delusions of hope, but when they were banished her bosom, existence had no charms for her; the attenuated chord of life, stretched to the utmost, at length broke, and the pure soul of Louisa accompanied

her Ricardo's to regions of celestial bliss.

With a distended tearless gaze Angelina viewed the inanimate forms of her parents; hers was no sorrow that words could express. The fever of her mind at length preyed on her intellects, and a melancholy delirium seized them. "Lead me," she exclaimed one day to her sorrowing domestics, "lead me to the grave where sleep my parents. I know they will awake at my call, for they always delighted in whatever gave me pleasure. Why do ye hesitate to obey me? I will go," she continued, rising from her seat, and supporting her trembling form on the arm of an attendant, "I will see, and once more be fondly embraced by them."

The attendants gazed on each other as if irresolute what to do, when Margueretta, who formerly was the favorite attendant of the hapless Theodora, desired them to comply with the wishes of Angelina.

With some difficulty they supported her to the chapel, and stopped at the marble monument which contained the remains of her parents, on the top of which were their sculptured representations.

Angelina long gazed with a vacant stare at the tomb, till at length the power of recollection dawned on her, and a flood of tears relieved her bursting heart.

"Here lie," said Margueretta, wish-

ing still more to increase the salutary stream of sorrow which flowed down her pale cheeks, "here lie the bodies of your father and mother; their memory is fresh in the hearts of all who knew them; deeply regretted did they die, for they delighted in acts of virtue and goodness. Ah! Signora, you may indeed weep for their loss, but they are now receiving the blessed rewards of a well-spent life."

Touched with the renewed recollection of the virtues of their late superiors, the attendants could not forbear weeping; and Margueretta, perceiving her speech had the wished-for effect on Angelina, was silent, while her aged eyes told the emotions of her bosom.

From that period her delirium ceased, and the tide of sorrow, which hitherto had overflowed the boundary, began to roll with less impetuosity, and she endeavoured to stem the torrent of her grief, in order to receive the Conte Angelo, who it appeared by the will of her father was appointed the guardian of herself and estates until such time as she should be married, or attain the age of maturity.

As the Conte will form a conspicuous part in the succeeding pages, it will be necessary to acquaint the reader with his character, and the sordid longings of his bosom, which actuated him to those acts of violence which we have now to record to posterity.

It it pleasing to guide the pen in

giving descriptions of the votaries of virtue, and their good acts ; but when obliged to pourtray deeds actuated by the Demon of darkness, it slowly passes over the page ; it however proceeds as anxious to endeavour to show, to the world the wide contrast between virtue and vice, the happiness attendant on the one, and the eternal misery and horrors which invariably follow the other.

The Conte Angelo, whom the late Marchese appointed to be the guardian of the Signora Angelina, was of a ferocious disposition, possessed of a great share of cunning and duplicity by which he endeavoured to veil the traits of his real disposition ; he was revengeful and avaricious, and little recked

the

the means, so as he attained the accomplishment of any favorite project.

When he heard of the death of the Marchese de Carlentini, and that he had appointed him the guardian of his daughter and her estates, a secret pleasure filled his soul; and he hasted to the Castello; where his presence would be necessary, and where he determined to take up his residence during the minority of his lovely ward.

That beauteous plant, though now somewhat faded by the bleak blasts of sorrow, yet retained the native gracefulness of its form; and the Conte; who had not seen Angelina for some years, was struck with her appearance, and immediately began to form various

plans and designs in his breast which he meant to unfold at a convenient season.

Laurentina, during the illness of the Marchese, and the subsequent calamitous events, had frequent opportunities of receiving the attentions of her new admirer, the Signor Marino, without fear of being discovered, since the domestics of the Castello were too much engaged to notice them and Angelina was always in the apartment with her parents while they yet lived.

Her father, the Conte Angelo's, arrival, however, obliged her to be more circumspect in her conduct; and instead of meeting Marino as she used to do *in* her own apartments, or the adjoining

ing grove, she was obliged to go at midnight into the Southern Hall, where Marino, who had found means to effect a secret entrance to that part of the Castello, used to await her coming.

Thus was Laurentina, through her own depravity and the artifices of the subtle Demon, totally divested of all female delicacy, and sought only to sate the turbulent desires of her guilty bosom.

It was not long after the arrival of her father that proceeding, according to her usual custom, in her nocturnal visitation, just as she had passed the corridore that led to the North Hall, that she was astonished to hear some paces in it. Bending forward at the

open portal she observed by the light of a lamp which was suspended from the lofty roof, Lupo, the confidential domestic of her father, in earnest converse with him; frequently they stopped, and appeared by their actions to be debating on a matter of great moment.

Having observed them for some time with much astonishment, she continued as they were proceeding down one of the side aisles formed by the triple row of columns that supported the roof, to cross the hall at the further extremity veiling her lamp lest its rays should cause her to be observed.

She soon gained the well-known passage that led to the court-yard which fronted the portals of the Southern Hall,

when

when she thought she heard a noise; terrified, she stopped and listened, but all was silent; and collecting her natural courage, she crossed the court-yard and entered the South Hall.

It was no longer in the ruinous condition in which the late Marchese had found it when seeking the remains of his murdered parent, the hapless Theodora, for he had repaired the ravages which Time had made in the Castello, when by means of the munificient bequest of the Signor Valvano he became possessed of the ability to do it.

On one side of the Hall was a suite of chambers which were adorned with the best part of the ancient cumbrous furniture that from time immemorial

had

had been used in this part of the Castello. There it was that Marino when he had met her in the Hall, would conduct her; and it was also there that, abandoned by every idea of delicacy, and studious only to gratify her passions, she passed the hours of midnight in shameful and sinful intercourse with him.

Marino on this eventful night received her as usual when she entered the portal of the Hall; they then proceeded to the well-known chamber. Laurentina mentioned to him the uncommon noise she had heard, which had somewhat blanched the roses on her cheek, when Marino smiling at her fears, endeavoured by his caresses to restore her to her wonted

wonted gaiety. He frequently kissed her, and now the fire of love mounting from their hearts concentred in their eyes, when at that moment the door burst open, and to the terror-struck gaze of Laurentina appeared her father, the Conte Angelo, with Lupo by his side, both with their swords drawn.

Enormous rage distended the features of his face as he rushed toward the unarmed Marino; and ere he could extricate himself from the fainting Laurentina, who clung to him for protection, the sword of the Conte had pierced his body, and the sanguine stream of life flowed over her now senseless form.

" Take this, and this," said the savage Angelo, as he replunged the sword into the dying Marino; " 'tis thus I would wipe out the stain my honor has received."

Marino uttered not a word, but with a deep groan fell on the floor, and by his side lay the blood-stained form of Laurentina motionless as the mouldering inmate of the tomb.

" Lupo," said the Conte, " bear to her chamber that female whom I no longer call daughter: to-morrow will see her far from these walls."

Lupo did as he was desired; and Angelo, casting a look of satisfaction at the still bleeding body of Marino, followed his

his domestic, who bore in his arms the pale insensate form of Laurentina.

The most extensive imagination cannot form an idea of the horrible sensation which assailed the mind of Laurentina. When returning to her senses she found herself in the ruffian grasp of Lupo, and saw her father preceding her with a lamp, still holding the bloody unsheathed sword which had pierced the body of her lover. The dread of instant death, aggravated by the tortures which she conceived the revengeful fury of her father would cause him to inflict on her, almost caused a second suspension of her vital powers.

In gloomy horrific silence she was borne through spacious passages and

halls

halls to her apartments, where Lupo laid her on her couch, and retired with the Conte, who locked the portal of her chamber.

The sound of the bolts as they were shot into the side-beam of the door-frame, vibrated with agonizing sensations on the soul of Laurentina. She had nothing to hope; the passions of her father were roused to their highest pitch; she knew his remorseless nature; he had witnessed the depravity of her conduct, and her punishment she was well convinced would be great and terrible.

Through the long dark melancholy night she listened in fearful expectancy of his return; each gust of wind as

it

it sighed along the passage, or agitated the leafy summit of the grove, made her heart palpitate with terror lest the sounds should be caused by the approach of her father.

The morning chearless dawned in east. The rosy tints of the rising sun glowed on the casements of the Castello; Laurentina arose and opened hers to admit the early zephyrs to refresh her. Exhausted by the poignancy of her sensations, she had not been long there when the noise of horses in the court-yard caught her attention; and looking down, she beheld some of the domestics of the Castello busied in making preparations for a journey. A carriage was standing at the portal of the North Hall, and the gigantic figure of Lupo

was amongst the crowd, giving the men directions.

The white garments of Laurentina as she was crossing the Southern Hall had caught the eye of the Conte Angelo as he was communing with his confidential Lupo on some dark and deep designs. Curious to know whither she was going at that silent hour, he cautiously followed her steps, and at length beheld her in the arms of Marino.

His passion being in some degree allayed by the bloody revenge he had taken in murdering that Signor, left him in possession of a moment's thought with respect to his daughter, and that it was which prevented him from completing

pleting the tragic scene by her destruction.

It would be difficult to describe the various conflicts of warring passions which raged by turns in his bosom; his hopes respecting his daughter being married to a Sicilian nobleman of high rank were entirely destroyed, and in her depravity his honor had received a wound. On mature consideration he determined to send her to a convent, where she should remain for life. Such was the result of his intentions, and Lupo had orders to put them in execution.

Early in the morning the Conte advanced along the corridore that led to the chamber of Laurentina. At the well-known sound of his steps she start-

ed,

ed, but unable to rise from her seat, she listened to the noise occasioned by the receding bolts which secured the portal, while busy fancy made them appear to be the knell that preceded her death.

The Conte entered. With a stern ferocious air and contracted brows he gazed on the fear-struck Laurentina. "Foul stain to my peace," said he, "instantly prepare to depart. The world shall no longer know that thou art in existence. In the gloomy cloister thou shalt wear out thy wretched life; a small punishment, for by the Saints, I could this instant foul my hands with thy blood, and scatter thy dismembered limbs to the ravenous beasts of prey."

The passions of Angelo were mounting to their highest pitch. One moment his countenance was red with rage; the next, deep and deadly malicious revenge would blanch his cheeks. Laurentina saw the furious tempest of his wrath, but silently; for she well knew that a word from her would fire the deadly mass of his resentment, which like the resistless composition that give wing to the murderous ball, would bear down all before it.

Tremblingly she arose; and with a downcast and averted face put on her veil; and her attendant entering made the necessary preparations for her departure, while the Conte with a disordered pace traversed the chamber.

When she was ready, the Conte looking out of the casement called to Lupo, to whom, when he entered the apartment, he delivered a packet, charging him to give it to the abbess of the convent of Santa Catherina, whither he was to conduct the Signora Laurentina, whom he now ordered to depart.

With a dejected pace she followed her savage conductor, who, assisting her to enter the carriage, mounted his horse, and, with two attendants, left the court-yard of the Castello.

The unhappy Laurentina, when she felt the motion of the vehicle which was to convey her from the delights of the world, unable to support her miserable sensations, sunk into a state of insensibility,

bility, in which she continued some hours.

The reader will perhaps not be surprised to find that Agatha, of whom so much mention has been made in these records, was no other than the Signora Laurentina; the Abbess, in compliance to the wishes of the Conte, having directed her to bear that name on her admission into the convent.

The Conte Angelo, when he had in some degree calmed the dreadful perturbations of his mind, again returned to the rumination of his designs respecting the Signora Angelina; but the period for putting them in execution was not yet arirved, as she mourned almost incessantly the loss of her parents.

CHAP. XII.

THE Signor Ferdinando, when he came according to his promise to the skreen of the convent chapel, was struck with horror at beholding stretched on the marble pavement the senseless form of Agatha. To approach her to render her any assistance was impossible, as the gate was locked, and Ferdinando for more than an hour remained with his eyes stedfastly fixed on the prostrate motionless nun.

At length, however, a feeble movement of the limbs announced the return of animation; and Ferdinando endeavoured to forward the exertions of nature by calling on her name, to bring back her recollection. "Agatha! my love," said he, "how miserable is thy situation, which precludes the possibility of my affording you any assistance. I stand here like the distracted lover on the shores of the ocean, when he sees the bark which holds the adored of his heart dashed against the rocks without the possibility of aiding her in that horrible moment. Agatha! speak to me, my love, my Agatha!"

"Who calls the wretched Agatha?" said the nun, with a tremulous voice, "is it the shade of Marianne? What

wouldst thou with me? Speak thy purpose, nor harrow up my senses further than their bearing, lest wild delirium should crack the attenuated thread that connects them!"

"Dear Agatha, it is Ferdinando that speaks to you."

"Ferdinando! I know that name, who utters it? would I had never heard it! My heart so deeply stained with crimes of blackest hue, would at least have been free of that which was against all laws, human and divine."

"My lovely Agatha, recollect your Ferdinando's voice. Oh! heavens! what a miserable situation is this that

I am

I am not able to approach you to endeavour to calm the agitation which doubtless the solitude and gloom of the place have caused in your tender bosom."

Agatha at length turned her gaze on Ferdinando, and recognized his well-known features. With some difficulty she took the key of the gate from its place of concealment in the folds of her garment, and reached it to Ferdinando, who having opened it, raised her prostrate form, and after some time succeeded in calming the wild tempest that disturbed her senses.

Although greatly surprized at the incoherent sentences which she had uttered, and which caused various surmises to

arise in his breast, Ferdinando would not ask any questions of Agatha of the reason of them, lest he should awaken the sensations they seemed to be occasioned by more forcibly in her recollection; he therefore dicoursed on a subject he well knew would not fail to please, and that was her emancipation from the convent.

Agatha by degrees forgot her terrors in the tender embrace of her lover, and the still more tender expressions which he made use of to restore her wonted spirits; but she looked on his features with anxiety, for the brilliant expression which once animated his dark eyes, and the colour which glowed in his cheeks, were gone. He observed her pitying gaze, and in order to account

account for his wan looks, as well as to perform the promise he made her the last night, he thus began the tale of his adventures.

"You no doubt, beloved Agatha, well recollect my promise of endeavouring to release you from these walls soon after you had entered them. It is perhaps necessary, in order to elucidate the various occurrences which since that time befel me, to commence my recital from an early period of my life.

"On the death of the old Marchese de Cavini, his son came to reside with my father, the Marchese de Montalino; for some time our friendships increased; we were about the same age, and apparently of similar dispositions. Two

years had passed which had witnessed an uninterrupted scene of comfort at our mansion, when my sister Palmyra came from the convent where she had been educated.

"To the finest of forms in Palmyra was added a heart endued with the greatest sensibility. Cavini possessed uncommon attractions, and that descriptive language which is pleasing to the ears of females, because they are inclined to believe what they wish to be true.

Here Agatha sighed; well she recollected the fascinating Cavini, and how by the syren voice of flattery and affected adulation, he had seduced her from the sweet paths of virtue; and which was finally the cause of of her

plunging

plunging into the most dreadful of all crimes— that of murder.

"The credulous Palmyra paid attention to the soft sighings of Cavini. I saw plainly the growing attachment. Immersed in state affairs, my father could pay but little attention to his family, and I determined to question Cavini myself on the subject.

"The rank of my father was equal to that of Cavini, but their possessions were not so; the old Marchese had left to his son great store of wealth, while my father, in consequence of his former dissipation, found it difficult to keep up appearances suitable to his rank in life.

"For the first time Cavini seemed confused, when I requested he would accompany me to my apartments, as I had something of consequence to discourse with him about.

"When I told him that I thought it the duty of a fond brother to be anxiously interested concerning the welfare of his sister, and that having observed he had paid of late great attention to Palmyra, I wishee to know if he had any design to honor my family with an alliance with it; he replied that 'twas true that the charms of my sister had interested him, and that he hoped when he was of an age to act for himself, that she would condescend to bless him with her hand.

"I was

"I was satisfied with his answer, and looked with impatience to the time when he would become possessed of his estates and I should embrace him as my brother.

"But alas! ere that period arrived, Palmyra was undone; and the cruel Cavini forgot the vows which had induced her to listen to his fascinating converse.

"In the melancholy looks of Palmyra, I read what had taken place, and when I questioned her, she threw her arms about my neck and acknowledged her weakness.

"Full of rage against Cavini, I challenged him to meet me in the field on the following morning. He haughtily

accepted it, and we left each other with a look of stern defiance.

"That evening I passed in my chamber; and being fully determined that either Cavini or myself should fall, I passed some of the hours of night in arranging my affairs; and at length, somewhat fatigued, retired to rest.

"Hardly had I closed my eyes when an assassin hired by the treacherous, base Cavini, sheathed twice his trusty dagger in my body, and left me weltering in my blood.

"My groans were heard by some of the domestics, who, rushing to my assistance, the bravo was taken, and confessed

fessed at whose instigation he had attempted to murder me.

"The Marchese, my father, would have reeked his vengeance on Cavini, but he had left the Castello.

"My wounds were not mortal, but the loss of blood ere they could be bound up was very great; and the gates of Death appeared to be open to receive me. After some time, I began slowly to recover, but the injurry I had received remained deep fixed in my bosom; and I determined to be revenged on Cavini whom I intended to seek as soon as my health would permit me.

"My rage was still further increased by the death of the unfortuate Pal-

myra;

myra; grief at her own indiscretion and my situation stopped the current of life. And thus, through the villainy of Cavini she found an early tomb.

" As soon as I was able, I commenced my search. Having learnt that Cavini was at the Castello of the Marchese de Carlentini, I repaired there, and to my great disappointment I was informed that he had left it; and it was on my return from that inquiry that I first had the happiness of seeing the lovely Agatha.

" You know," continued Ferdinando, " that from this place I repaired to Lingua Crossa; my journey there was in order to find out Cavini, but I did not

not succeed; and according to my promise, I immediately returned.

"On leaving you in order to prepare horses for our intended flight, as I wound up the steps which led to the ruined chapel in the wood, I thought I heard a noise as of a hasty footstep. Somewhat alarmed lest the privacy of the place should have made it a resort for banditti, I stopped; and drawing my sword, attentively listened for some moments. Nothing, however, disturbed the silence of the hour. And at length, concluding that it might have been the attendant echo of my own paces I ascended the remainder of the steps, When as I was leaving the chapel I was suddenly attacked by several armed men. Concluding that they had a design

against

against my life, I resolved to sell it as dearly as possible, but a dreadful wound which I received in my head soon rendered me incapable of resistance, and I sunk insensible on the earth.

" How long I was in this situation I am ignorant; but when my senses returned I found myself in a small vessel, in company with two fierce-looking wretches. The wound in my head had been bound up, and the bleeding had stopped. I was silent; for I well knew that my entreaties or invectives could little avail with the men who were with me, whose countenances too plainly bespoke their savage natures.

" I perceived that we were steering for one of the isles of Lipari, and in the evening

evening the boat came to an anchor at the mouth of a small creek in the island of Stromboli. The men assisted me to go on shore, for I was still faint and weak with the loss of blood.

" By the time we had reached the shore the shades of Night had completely enveloped the face of Nature in her dark investiture. Patrono, one of the men, held a torch, while his comrade Lupoli seizing my arm in his nervous grasp, hurried me along the beach. We ascended the steep side of a rock, and when we had arrived at the summit, Patrono, laying down his torch, rolled away a large stone which concealed an aperture. It would be difficult to form an idea of my sensations when Lupoli fastened some cords round my arms, and

told

told me that I must descend into the dark interior of the place whose approach seemed to be so well concealed. The horrible idea that I was to be entombed alive made me exert my small remains of strength in order to prevent the completion of the dreadful fate that awaited me. Wounded and weak, my efforts only served to irritate my conductors, who thrust me into the hole, and lowered me down till my feet reached the bottom of the cave; they then desired I would take the ropes from my body, and on my persisting in my refusal to comply with their request, they threw down the part they held, and rolled the stone over the mouth of the cave. For some time I sat on the damp earth, while the most dreadful ideas occupied my mind. Not the smallest glimpse of light was perceptible,

tible, and the silence of the place was as undisturbed as that which reigns in the grave. At times I conjectured that my entrance into the monastery had been discovered, and that the monks had thus effectually prevented me from troubling them again; and I was the more easily tempted to be of this opinion, because I could not fix my suspicions elsewhere, being unconscious of having an enemy.

" In these ruminations passed the hours of night, aud in all likelihood a great portion of the next day. No food had been given to me, and my thoughts became every moment more gloomy and desponding, when a noise above, and a sudden stream of light which illumined that part of the cave in which I was, made me look up. The stone was re-

moved,

moved, and a basket was let down at my feet, and the voice of Patrono directed me to take out the contents.

" While I was thus employed I heard voices in conversation above. One in particular engaged my attention, which, trembling with rage, I well recollected to be that of Cavini. How did my bosom swell with anger; in an instant I forgot the anguish of my wound and the weak state of my exhansted frame, and in accents of the highest indignation I reproached that base wretch for his conduct, but my words, almost lost in the vast expanse of the cavern, but slightly reached the ear of my persecutor, who derided my threats, and laughed in the contemplation of his supposed security from the effects of my just indignation.

" The

" The stone was again rolled over the cavern, and darkness and silence resumed their mournful dominion in it; I partook of the provisions which had been let down to me in the basket, and ruminated only on revenge. From the quantity of food which was brought, I conjectured that I should not be visited for some days, and I determined to examine, as well as I was able, the extent of my dungeon, in the hopes of finding some outlet to escape.

" One consideration made me long deliberate what to do ere I entered on this undertaking, and that was the fear lest I should not be able to discover the place where my provisions lay after I had left them.

" The

"The ropes with which I had been lowered into the cavern were still about my arms; I took them off, and, having unravelled them, tied the pieces together, and the end to the pitcher which held my allowance of water; with this clue I set forward, and carefully felt a part of the rugged inclosure of my abode, but no where could I discover any means of escape: the cavern was of such great extent that my clue would not permit me to search round it, but which, however, I effected at another period, when, through long residence, I had become used to my miserable prison.

"My provisions were regularly lowered down to me every fourth day, as I was afterwards informed; for in those regions of night and horror the day and night

night were alike enveloped in opaque gloom.

"I had long given over all hopes of ever being able to effect my escape, and in all probability should there have terminated my miserable existence, but for a circumstance which, though attended with horrors inconceivable, brought about the means of my deliverance.

"It was a terrible convulsion of nature; the igneous particles of combustible matter which had long been maturing in the fertile bosom of the earth, at length exploded; the ground heaved and rocked beneath me; unable to stand, I fell on it, and every moment expected to be swallowed up in the opened clefts, and to be crushed to atoms

in them when they closed. I heard the dreadful roaring of the thunder, and, after a terrible concussion the large stone that covered the hole above was removed from it; then the lightning, at times, illumined my cavern, and by shewing me my situation, increased the horrors that reigned in my mind. A gulph, deep and wide, was opened on one side of the dungeon, and my aching eyes, whenever the lightning darted into my abode, were strained in vain to discover its depth. After some time the trembling earth began to subside, and at length all was quiet. I looked up, and saw the clouds tinged with the bright radiance of the morning sun, and for the first time since my miserable confinement, a gleam of hope dawned in my mind that I might perhaps find

some

some way to effect my escape; I looked anxiously at the aperture in the roof, but to raise myself up to it was impossible. A stream of air made me hastily remove my gaze, in order to find out from whence it proceeded, and a faint glimmer of light from the further extremity of the cave made me start forward to examine it. The motion of the earth had made a small fissure in the side of the rock, but so narrow that I was not able to force my body through it. The hopes of deliverance from my dreary prison gave me sufficient strength to enable me to pull down a large piece of rock, which, however, had almost annihilated me in its fall.

"While thus engaged, I heard a voice calling to me from the aperture

in the roof: it was Patrono, who came to see if I had survived the earthquake. My agitation was so great lest he should discover the opening in the rock, that I could scarcely answer his inquiries; great indeed therefore was my satisfaction when he returned the stone to its former place, and left me to proceed in my exertions for my liberty.

"With great difficulty I forced my body through the fissure, and looked out to find whither it led; but to my sorrow I saw rolling beneath me the billows of the ocean, and that there appeared no way for me to escape, without precipitating myself into the sea.

"My resolution was soon formed; I returned to the cave, and taking up the

ropes,

ropes, twisted them together till I judged them sufficiently strong to bear the weight of my body; I then went to the fissure, and tying the end round a projecting rock, lowered myself down. Fortune favored my attempt; the water was not deep at the place where I descended, and I gained the beach in safety.

"As it was still light, I was fearful of being seen, and until Night had spread her shadowy veil over the face of creation, I remained in a recess formed in the rock in whose hollow womb I had passed so many days and nights of misery.

"When at length I emerged from the rocks, I wound along the beach, uncer-

tain where to go, and anxiously looking out for a hut where I could stay till an opportunity offered to leave the island.

" The noise of oars on the water now broke on the nocturnal silence, and at length I perceived a boat approach that part of the shore where I was; fearing that it might be some of the ruffians whom Cavini had employed against me, I quickly retired, and, seeing a light among the rocks at no great distance from me, repaired toward it.

" Without any means of defence or resistance, you will hardly be able to judge of my agonies when, on advancing to the light, I found it proceeded from the mouth of a cave in which there was a fire, and as the blazes illumined the

place

place I plainly discovered standing by it Patrono and Lupoli, and at the same instant heard behind me the paces of the party who had arrived in the boat. To have fled from the place would have occasioned instant discovery, and my only resource was to lie down on the rock, and trust to Fortune and the darkness of the night for my protection.

"As the party approached how did my bosom burn with rage when I plainly distinguished among the voices that of Cavini; they all passed without discovering me, and entered the cave, when Cavini inquired of Patrono concerning his prisoner.

"Patrono replied, that thinking it probable I might have been killed by

some of the loose stones of the cave falling on me, he had been in the morning to see, but that I was then well.

" Cavini looked dissatisfied, and taking the man by the arm, led him out of the cave. When the party had passed by I had shifted my station to a small recess near the mouth of the cave, which entirely concealed me from sight; Cavini stopped close by me, and holding out a purse to Patrono, promised to give him the contents if he would rid him of all future anxiety respecting me by my death. Patrono eagerly took the purse, and promised to bring him the wished intelligence in the course of the next hour; and then, having first called out his comrade Lupoli to accompany him, set out on his dark mission.

" The

"The party in the cave now departed from it, laden with various spoils, which I learnt from their conversation had been lately taken from a merchant-vessel, and they were carrying them to the boat with the intention of disposing of them in Sicily. Cavini was now left alone in the cavern, and I determined to seize that opportunity to revenge myself for the injuries I had received from him. I had observed a parcel of swords lying in a remote corner of the cave, and hastily rushing into it, seized one of them, and appeared before the astonished and terrified wretch, whose countenance grew of a deadly hue when in my emaciated features he recollected the man whom he had but a few moments before hired an assassin to destroy. Without speaking he drew his sword, and I rushed on

him, determined, if it cost me my life, to deprive him of his.

"My impetuosity had nearly proved fatal; I received two wounds ere I could plunge my sword into his body; 'This,' said I, as I deeply sheathed the thirsty blade, 'is for Palmyra's wrongs; and this for my own.'

"The last thrust pierced his heart; he died instantly: and now that I had revenged myself as far as his death would permit me, I became solicitous for myself; my wounds were painful, and the loss of blood rendered me faint. With difficulty I left the cave, and the dawn assisting me with its rosy beams, I gained the abode of a peasant, where my wounds long detained me.

"During

"During all my sufferings, the remembrance of your situation, lovely Agatha, was ever present to me; and the moment I was able I hasted to you, in order to carry into execution the plans I had formed for your emancipation.

"Thus have I amply accounted to you for my absence; and my pain-worn form is, I trust, a sufficient evidence of the truth of my relation."

Ferdinando thus concluded; and Agatha, who during the recital had forgot her sorrows in listening to his eventful tale, from his concluding words again hoped to enjoy the pleasures of the world.

CHAP. XIII.

TIME at length mellowed the sorrows of Angelina, and the Conte was preparing to set in motion the design he had formed respecting her from the first moment when her beauties, though somewhat faded by sorrow, met his view. Her large estates had awakened his avaricious desires; her beauties had roused his passions; and he secretly resolved to possess himself of both. He therefore endeavoured to insinuate himself into her

her favor. His conduct was attention mingled with respect, before her he appeared all mild and gentle, and the unsuspecting Angelina thought herself happy in having a guardian who appeared to take so much interest in whatever could tend to soften the sorrows of her heart.

The Conte mistook the grateful looks of Angelina for the gaze of affection; for his vanity would not permit him to take into consideration the great difference between his years and those of his lovely ward; and he therefore concluded that the wishes of his heart would be attended with success.

One morning he sent a message to Angelina requesting her presence in his apartment. She immediately complied;

and entering the saloon, saw the Conte standing at the further end at one of the casements, apparently deeply involved in thought. He started when she was anounced by the domestic who attended, and advancing toward her, led her to a sofa. He looked confused, and once or twice seemed going to speak to her, but stopped ere he had uttered any words. At length, however, he summoned resolution, and thus addressed the astonished Angelina :—

" I sent for you, lovely Angelina, to acquaint you with what 'tis likely my behaviour to you may have expressed. Need I add that love the most sincere, the most ardent, animates my breast for you. Yes, Angelina, Conte de Angelo *solicits* your hand, which will make him *the happiest* of men."

The surprize of Angelina at the speech of the Conte exceeded description; She, however, instantly determined that her answer should be such as would prevent further solicitation, and formed it in these words:—

"The Conte Angelo must not conceive me destitute of gratitude for the favorable opinion he has entertained of me, and also for his kind and attentive conduct during the long weary hours of sorrow which I have endured; but marriage is a subject which is far distant from my thoughts, and 'tis more than likely will never enter them."

As the yellow leaf of the autumnal blast, so fell the countenance of the Conte. He saw by her decided manner that he

had no hopes, and all his air-formed visions vanished in a moment. Impatient of contradiction, he had almost hastily answered her; but recollecting himself, he thus replied:—

"Fair Angelina, in an unfavorable moment have I preferred my suit; suffer me, however, to hope that time and my attentions will cause a happy change in your resolution; at present I will not longer detain you."

Having said this he rose, and without giving Angelina an opportunity to reply, offered her his hand, and conducted her to the portal of the saloon; where bowing low he ordered the domestic who waited to attend her to her apartments, and then, disappointed and

vexed,

vexed, returned to acquaint his confidential Lupo with his ill success.

In the retirement of her chamber Angelina reflected with pain on the occurrences of the morning. Rumour, with her many tongues, had not given to the Conte Angelo the best of characters; from his former conduct to her she was, however, inclined to disbelieve the prevailing reports, but now a suspicion not unmixed with fear crossed her mind, that he had sinister views respecting her, and that it was those which had induced him to attempt to veil his usual disposition, till his ends being served, it would no longer be requisite for him to wear the specious mask of hypocricy.

She was much embarrased when the

hour

hour of repast arrived ; but, however, endeavouring to conceal the agitation of her mind, she entered the Hall.

Conte Angelo having noticed her approach, with his usual courtesy advanced to hand her to the table, and introduced her to his confessor, the father Hildargo, who had that morning arrived at the Castello.

Angelina instinctively shrunk from this man, whose appearance was such as might well account for her sudden dislike. A pair of ferret eyes glared from beneath his scowling brows ; his nose was prominent and hooked ; on his mouth seemed to sit a malicious smile whenever he gazed on the Signora Angelina ; his height was far above the common size ; and a stoop in his shoulders completed the uncouth figure.

Silent and unpleasant passed the time of the banquet; and when it was concluded, Angelina arose, and in the retirement of her chamber reflected on the occurrences of the day.

Her ruminations were interrupted by a knocking at the portal of her apartment. It was the father Hildargo. He came from the Conte Angelo to request that she would honor the evening banquet with her presence, and which he meant should be in a pavillion that was erected near the stream which meandered through the valley.

Angelina at first hesitated to comply with the wishes of the Conte, but at length, unwilling to incur the displeasure

pleasure of a man in whose power the will of her father had unfortunately placed her, she requested the father to bear her compliance to the wishes of the Conte.

Pleased with the success of his mission he departed; and a short time after Angelina, throwing a veil over her lovely features, left her chamber, and crossing the lawn approached the pavillion.

That building had been erected by the late Marchese de Carlentini, and in it he had passed many blisaful hours with his beloved Louisa. Angelina had not visited the place since the death of those lamented parents, and the recollection of the happy hours she had there enjoyed with them overcame her, and the pearly

drops

drops of sorrow fell from her beauteous eyes as leaning on the arm of her attendant she surveyed the well-known spot.

Angelina was roused from her melancholy ruminations, by the approach of the Conte; he took her hand, and leading her to a couch in the pavillion, sat himself by her side, and expressed his sense of her goodness in acceding to his request. A table was spread with wines of various sorts and the delicious fruits of the season, at which sat the father Hildargo, who seemed to have partaken freely of the ruby vintage; and as Angelina once glanced her eyes on the countenance of the Conte, she observed with great concern that it was flushed with wine. He was profuse in his attentions

tions and compliments, at which Angelina felt both confused and offended.

The band of musicians, who were stationed at such a distance from the pavillion that the dulcet sounds of their instruments mellowed by distance should appear to be the effect of enchantment, now sweetly filled the air with their harmonious cadences, which floated gently on its fragrant bosom, impregnated with the rising odors of aromatic shrubs and flowers. Those insinuating sounds filled the bosom of Angelina with an emotion of pleasure; for a moment she forgot her situation; but when the measure which had so much pleased her concluded, and a Sicilian piece was performed which she well recollected to have heard in the presence of her regretted

parents

parents, her bosom was the abode of sorrow, and the pearly drops of anguish started from her eyes.

The Conte immediately ordered the music to cease; and when Hildargo had retired for that purpose, he threw himself at the feet of the sighing maid.

"Empress of my soul," said he, "can you who are so feelingly alive to sensibility behold me at your feet? me, who so sincerely adore you; and who must be for ever miserable unless you compassionate my sufferings, and make me, by a blessed acquiescence with my wishes, the happiest of mortals!"

His speech, spoke in the hurry of affected passion, and the warmth which

was caused by the wine he had drank, made Angelina immediately forget her sorrow; and regarding the Conte with a serious gaze, she replied:—

"I thought, Signor, that the conversation we had this morning would have prevented you from again bringing forward a subject displeasing to my ears."

"Oh! say not so," replied the Conte, evidently struggling to conceal the passion which was rising in his bosom, "do not condemn me to black despair; but by giving me your hand, cause joy and delight to visit my heart."

"From your years, Conte," said the offended Angelina, striving to disengage herself from his grasp, "I should have expected

expected a far different conduct. I fully perceive your design in requesting my presence here this evening was to insult me; I shall now go, and take this as a lesson not to expose myself again to such unlicensed behaviour."

"By heavens, Angelina, you wrong me;" said the Conte passionately, "there is some minion whom you have favored with yonr affections, and is the cause of your present contemptuous conduct; but should I ever find him, dearly shall he rue the day."

Angelina haughtily arose from her seat. "When wine ceases to influence your conduct, Conte," she replied "you will recollect how much you have wandered

dered from the path from which a man of honor never deviates."

The Conte Angelo started up; his countenance glowed with rage; he again caught hold of the hand of Angelina, which she had with difficulty snatched from him, and in a furious tone exclaimed:—

"'Tis well, Angelina. What persuasions cannot effect, other means may; you now deride my power, but you shall dread it."

This said he loosed her hand; and Angelina, trembling at his words, and without courage to reply, left the pavillion, and entered the Castello. Scarcely conscious of her actions, she proceeded

to

to her apartments, and give vent to her grief by a flood of tears. She reflected on the words of the Conte, and the revengeful dark looks which accompanied them; she recalled to her mind all the unfavorable reports which had reached her concerning him; and a dread of his threats, since she had but too much reason to believe that he would endeavour to put them in execution, banished all comfort from her breast.

Sadly ruminating on her present afflictions, the pensive Angelina beheld the nocturnal vapour slowly arise from the valley, and the sable banner of night unfurled from the heavens. Her apartment was enveloped in gloomy obscurity, for neither did the moon or stars illumine the hemisphere; she for a time

looked at the dark clouds as they sailed on the bosom of the blast, and often wished herself in those regions where she might survey them rolling thousands of leagues below her; regions where the blessed reside, where the virtues of her parents insured their reception, and where she hoped to join them, for her mind was unknowing of evil, and her bosom was the seat of virtue.

From such thoughts hasty paces in the corridore suddenly disturbed her; the door of her apartment was rudely thrown open, and Conte Angelo entered, followed by Lupó bearing a torch.

From his irregular steps Angelina, who had started from her seat, immediately concluded that he was still more

inflamed

inflamed with wine that when she had last seen him; and though trembling from apprehensions of brutal treatment, she collected sufficient fortitude to demand the cause of his intrusion.

"Sweet girl," said he, approaching her, while a malicious smile of settled revenge distorted his countenance, "I forget the unkind expressions which you used toward me; I love you, and the pious father Hildargo is now awaiting us in the chapel, to witness my vows of adoration."

Cold drops of water stood on the countenance of the trembling Angelina on listening to the insolent address and daring intentions of the Conte. To escape was impossible; the ruffian form

of Lupo, who seemed to watch the countenance of his master, ready to execute his commands, was between her and the door of the apartment, while the Conte had seized her hand, which she in vain endeavoured to release from his firm hold.

"Your intentions, Conte Angelo," said she, "are such as I cannot fathom. I am willing to impute the rudeness of your conduct to the influence of wine, and hope you will show me that you are sorry for your behaviour by instantly quitting my apartment."

"To do that," said Angelo, "I will not refuse; but you, fair maid, must bear me company. Come," said he, dragging her along toward the portal of the

the chamber, " we waste the precious moments."

Angelina, the distracted Angelina, screamed with affright and horror; but the cautious Conte had removed the attendants out of the hearing of her exclamations, and no succor appeared to preserve her from the base intentions of the malicious designing Angelo.

Passing through an unfrequented part of the Castello, the Conte stopped at an iron gate, while Lupo drew aside the bolts which fastened it: heavily it creaked on the massy hinges as he forced it back; when, overcome with the horrors of her situation, Angelina sunk on the pavement, alike unconscious of her past

sorrows and the anticipation of her approaching misery.

Lupo, taking her up in his arms, while the Conte held the torch, bore her through the gateway into the chapel. At the altar stood the father Hildargo, who was to perform the ceremony that was to seal the misery of Angelina. Lupo deposited his insensible lovely burthen on the steps of the altar, and assisted by Hildargo, (for the Conte Angelo was too much intoxicated to afford her any help,) at length recalled her fleeting senses.

The father Hildargo first attracted her gaze. "Save me!" she exclaimed, "oh! preserve me from the unprincipled Conte; perform not a ceremony

which

which my soul shrinks from with horrors indescribable, as you hope for happiness beyond this life."

Hildargo replied not. Hardened as was his heart yet he was not quite callous to the miserable situation of Angelina, and he silently returned to the altar, awaiting the further intentions of Angelo.

The Conte at the sound of her voice hastily advanced, and raising her from the steps of the altar, desired the father to pronounce the marriage ceremony.

Angelina rent the air with her screams; they re-echoed through the chapel. The Conte paused; he was fearful that they would alarm the household; and should

any other but those devoted to his interest witness the forced marriage, he was well convinced that it would be of no avail.

"Promise me," said he, "that on the third night from this you will voluntarily accompany me to the altar, or this moment witnesses the completion of my wishes. Answer me directly, or a few minutes sees you by force my bride."

The hope of escaping from a fate so dreadful made Angelina, after some hesitation, faintly promise to be the wife of the Conte on the day he mentioned. His stern savage features relaxed into a smile as he thanked her for her kind acquiescence; and he led her back to the door of her chamber, attended by Lupo, where

where bowing low, he departed with his trusty agent.

Angelina sunk nearly insensible into a seat. The agitations she had experienced throughout the whole of that day were more than her tender frame could support; and had not a flood of tears relieved her bursting brain, her intellectual faculties must have deserted her, and a horrible delirium have succeeded.

The early beam of the morning beheld the lovely maid pale, drenched in the flood of woe, her beauteous tresses all disordered, while the hectic glow which at times appeared in her cheeks anounced the fever which tormented her trembling frame.

The chaos of miserable ideas which tortured her had not left her a moment's time to reflect on any other circumstance. She had given the Conte a promise to be united to him, which his agent would prove beyond the power of disbelief; an immediate flight was therefore the only resource by which she could hope to avoid the detested nuptials; but even that appeared impossible, as the Conte would doubtless watch her conduct with a wary eye till he had gained his vile ends.

Oppressed with such a weight of misery as these reflections brought to her panting bosom, she retired to a small chamber, which was set apart for the purpose of private devotion; she there threw herself on her knees before the

altar,

altar, and besought the All-powerful to release her from her unjust persecutions, or to strengthen her to encounter whatever evils His wisdom thought fit to inflict on her.

From the clouds of dazzling lustre which veiled the Omnipotent, who from his empyrean throne high raised above myriads of celestial thrones, beheld the most secret actions, the most hidden thoughts of mortals, proceeded Hope and Confidence, sent by him to comfort the sorrowing Angelina. In an instant darting down from their celestial abode unseen, they hovered round the imploring maid, and infused in her breast their animating attributes; and having thus fulfilled their heavenly mission, again

bent before the footstool of the Almighty.

Angelina arose from her prayers with a heart teeming with thankfulness for the internal composure which now resided in her breast; even a languid smile dimpled her beauteous cheeks as she gazed on the blue expanse of Heaven, while the grateful tear trembled on its lovely brink.

Some time was thus passed, and Angelina with a light pace now opened the door of her oratory, and passing through the apartment where she usually sat, endeavoured to open the outer portal which led to the corridore that communicated with the other part of the Castello; but the Conte, fearing that

some

some sinister event might take place which would deprive him of his intended lovely prize, and well knowing how forced was her consent to be united to him, had taken the best precaution to secure her till the period of the nuptials, by making her a prisoner.

The countenance of Angelina fell when she found that the door was fastened, as it precluded all hopes of her being able to effect her escape; she, however, did not give way to despair, but waited with resignation the event.

She was deeply ruminating on her parents, when the noise occasioned by unfastening the portal made her cast her eyes on it. The unwelcome figure of

Lupo

Lupo entering as it unclosed, met her view.

"The Conte, Signora, has ordered me to inquire which of your domestics you would wish to attend you."

"I would have you ask of Conte Angelo," replied Angelina firmly, "why, since I have acquiesced in his request, I am made a prisoner in my own residence."

"Signora," said the artful and trusty Lupo, "you know how passionate the Conte is, and were I to be the bearer of any message which brings his orders in question, 'tis like he would wreak his anger on me I trust, therefore, you will

will excuse my not complying with your wish."

Angelina disdained to make any reply, and on his repeating his first question, desired that Annetta might be sent to her; on which he departed the chamber, carefully fastening the door after him.

Annetta was her favorite domestic; she greatly loved her mistress; and when she was admitted to her presence could not refrain her tears at seeing her treated in a manner so harsh and so unbecoming her rank. She had brought with her a basket filled with provisions; and Angelina, who had passed many hours without the strengthening aid of nourish-

nourishment, partook, though sparingly, of the morning repast.

Angelina confided in Anneta her intention of escaping, if it was possible, from the power of the Conte; and the morning was passed in consultations on the way in which that desirable event could be brought about.

The suit of apartments which she occupied were very extensive, and formed a principal part of the Western Tower. Many of the chambers, as being useless, Angelina had ordered to be fastened up; and in the hope that from some of them there might be a communication, either with the courts below or the turrets above, she determined to examine them minutely.

In

In some of the chambers were doors, but they were either fastened on the outside or the keys were wanting which fitted the locks, and Angelina began to fear that no outlet could be obtained. She now entered the last of the apartments; in which there was also a door deep-seated in an obscure arch; it was also fastened, but on Annetta's trying the keys, one was found that fitting the wards of the lock drew back the bolts, and the door flew open.

Angelina hastily passed on to discover whither it led, and found herself in a passage, the roof of which was arched; long narrow casements, whose panes were darkened by the labour of the spider, afforded so gloomy and uncertain a light, that, half afraid to venture

in

in the unknown place, she drew back; she was, however, somewhat encouraged by the presence of Annetta, and leaning on her arm, silently proceeded, softly treading the dusty pavement, lest the noise occasioned by their footsteps might unfortunately be heard, and frustrate her new-formed hopes.

The passage was of great length, and was terminated by an arched recess in which was a door: this Annetta opened; it led into a gallery, which Angelina on entering discovered to be in the extensive chapel, which was in the south wing of the Castello. At one end a flight of marble steps led down to the altar, and communicated with the lofty aisles of the chapel. To descend them at that time would be attended with

danger

danger of a discovery of her intentions, and she resolved to wait for the friendly gloom of night, which would shroud her actions from observation.

She then returned as quickly as possible through the tedious passage to her apartments, for she trembled lest the Conte or Lupo might have been there in her absence; her fears, however, were groundless; and now she long looked with anxiety at the Heavens, where glowed in meridian splendor the bright luminary of day; she watched his declining beams, and as he seemed to dip into the tremulous waves of the western ocean, hailed the approach of the grey cincture of evening which began to skirt the horizon.

The pallid face of the moon appeared in the east slowly gathering its borrowed lustre; its silver rays brightened the walls of the Castello; the dim twinkling stars began to peep forth, and at length the firmament glowed with myriads of nocturnal lamps.

The busy hum of animated creation now faintly reached the ear; soon it died away, and night and silence commenced their sommific reign.

Angelina tremblingly arose, and Annetta having lit the lamp preceded her to the chamber from which was the passage to the chapel; for she determined to accompany her mistress in her flight, and to share her dangers and fatigues.

Angelina trembled when passing through the long-drawn aisles of the chapel at the echoes which accompanied her footsteps. Timidly she viewed the recumbent effigies of her ancestors, which the feeble efforts of the sculptor had placed on their tombs to convey to future times their decaying memory.

At length she left the chapel and entered the South Hall. From that place Angelina knew there was a communication with the northern part of the building, which if they could discover, it would then be easy to leave the Castello.

Fortune favored her researches; she found the passage, and passed hastily through it. In proportion as she advanced nearer the north wing her fears increased

creased, for there the Conte resided, and his domestics, who perhaps might not have retired from the hall. She often stopped to listen, but no sound met her ear; while Annetta would endeavour to encourage her to continue on their way.

She had almost arrived at the entrance to the North Hall, when she observed from a door which was half open, a stream of light; terrified she stopped, for to pass it was attended with the utmost danger; and yet there was no other way to enter the hall. Thus irresolute she leaned on Annetta, trembling with her fears; when the door opened, and Lupo, carrying a lamp, entered the passage.

He,

He, however, proceeded toward the hall without turning round; which if he had done Angelina must have been discovered. Her terror, however, was so great, that Annetta for some time could scarcely keep her from sinking on the pavement. That faithful attendant at length succeeded in some measure in composing the agitation of her mistress, and they now cautiously advanced to the hall.

Silence reigned in the dusky interior. Opposite to them was the portals and to which the steps of the fugitives were directed. They soon reached them; and as they were passing through the gates that opened to the road from the court-yard in front of the hall, Angelina looking up beheld the Conte Angelo slowly

slowly pacing the walls in converse with Lupo.

Fear winged her steps, she instantly darted toward the grove accompanied by Annetta, in the hopes that its dark recesses would skreen them from the search of her persecutor, who had witnessed her flight from the battlements.

The light of the moon guided her steps in the grove, and without ever stopping to listen if she was pursued, Angelina gained the road: and unknowing which way she should turn, fortunately took that which leading over a hilly tract brought her out of the valley.

Angelina well knowing that if the Conte should overtake her, her destiny

was

certain, continued her journey, though almost fainting with fatigue, when the noise of horses' feet advancing toward them made her stop.

A moment's reflection convinced her that it could not be the Conte or any of his people, and her fears were therefore quieted on that head; but it might be a party of banditti; and should she fall into the power of lawless freebooters, her situation would be more dreadful than even the one she was endeavouring to fly from.

She looked despairingly around her for some place where she might hide till they passed by, but no such friendly covert appeared; the place they were passing over was an extensive heath, and

the bright beams of the moon made all objects visible at a great distance.

Composing her agitation as much as she was able, she determined to meet what she could not avoid with all the fortitude she was able. She now could easily discover the horsemen, who were quickly advancing, when a noise of voices in the direction she had travelled made her turn round, and she saw the well-known forms of Conte Angelo and Lupo, with two of the domestics of the Castello. They were on foot, but by the speed which they used in their approach, fatigued as she was, to hope to escape by flight was useless.

Of two evils Angelina determined to choose the least. Her fate was certain

if

if she was again in the power of the Conte; and the travellers, who were now at hand, even should they be banditti, might be prevailed upon by her entreaties and promises of reward, to protect her from her bitter enemy

"Whoever ye are," said she, "have pity, I beseech you, and protect me from the unprincipled Conte Angelo, who is now advancing, and who would compel me to what is worse than death—a union with him."

The party, consisting of a cavalier and two domestics, instantly stopped; and the cavalier leaving his horse advanced to Angelina.

"Signora," said he, "you have for-

tunately met with friends; I will dispute the road with the Conte, meanwhile do you and your attendant mount my horses, and pursue your way to the convent of Santa Maria, which is not more than a league hence."

The moments were precious; the servants of the cavalier assisted Annetta on one of their horses, while the cavalier placed the trembling Angelina on his, and then bidding her a respectful adieu said, "To-morrow, Signora, I shall hope to see you in safety."

Angelina breathed a prayer for his preservation; and turning her horse's head, pursued the track he had pointed out.

She proceeded as fast as she was able,

often

often turning round to look at the party, who seemed to be awaiting the Conte Angelo; distance now obscured them from her view; but once she stopped her steed, for a faint clash of arms broke on the silence of night. She listened some time, but those sounds of hostile import were heard no more.

The lofty walls of the convent were now made perceptible by the beams of the moon shining full on them; and Angelina, after some stay at the gates, was admitted to the chamber of the porteress, till the abbess should be informed of her arrival.

Conte Angelo, the moment he had beheld Angelina, descended instantly from the battlements with Lupo, in or-

der to bring her back. In their way from the battlements they passed through the North Hall, and Lupo summoned two of the domestics to attend them in the search. During this time the friendly grove had afforded a shelter to the Signora Angelina; and when the Conte entered it, he employed some time in searching about for the fair fugitive, supposing she had concealed herself in some of the umbrageous recesses.

Thus unknowingly he afforded time to his intended victim to gain the road; and when at length he became convinced that she must have passed through the wood, he left it, and soon after beheld at some distance her white garments waving in the air, as she passed over the rising boundary of the valley.

His

His rage and vexation when he saw that she had met with protection and assistance from the horsemen was excessive, and he determined to punish them for it.

Furiously he advanced, and drawing his sword, threatened to sheath it in the breast of the cavalier if he did not permit one of his people to mount the remaining horse, in order to bring back the fugitives, one of whom, he added, was his affianced wife.

" As the speech of the Signora whom I had the happiness to assist did not imply such relationship, I hold myself bound in honor, Conte, to resist your attempt to follow her. If your pretensions were just, why should she fly you ?"

"Who can account for the follies of women?" said the Conte hastily. "In one word, are you disposed to let me have the horse; or will you dare to oppose my progress?"

"The horse," said the cavalier, "I certainly shall refuse; and I dare oppose any one who endeavours to oppress a female."

"Enough," said the Conte, furiously attacking him; "you now seek your own destruction."

The cavalier defended himself with undaunted resolution; his servants were also engaged with Lupo and the two domestics; and Death clapped his skeleton hands, delighted with the pleasing pros-

pect

pect of glutting his rapacious maw with fresh victims.

The cavalier disarmed the Conte: a well-aimed blow divided his sword; and Lupo, seeing the situation of his master, attacked the cavalier. Short, however, was the contest: Lupo fell; and falling, died; his gigantic form was pierced with the sword of his opponent, and his life flowed out at the aperture.

The domestics fled, and the Conte remained with the cavalier, who thus addressed him:

"Learn from the fortune of this night, Conte Angelo, that the votaries of oppression should be thrice cloathed in complete armour ere with even greater

numbers they dare to face those who are the defenders of innocence."

This said, he turned indignantly aside, and mounting the remaining horse, left the spot ensanguined by the yet warm stream which had flowed from Lupo's pallid corse.

Gloomily Angelo, cursing his ill fortune, retired. Angelina, the lovely Angelina, had escaped him. Concluding, however, that she could not have proceeded far, he hastened back to the Castello de Carlentini, where he immediately ordered a large party of his people to mount the fleetest horses, and to pursue the lovely fugitive; with a promise of a large reward if they should succeed.

Lorenzo de Montalto was the name of the cavalier who had so fortunately protected Angelina from the designs of Conte Angelo; he was the only son of the venerable Marchese de Montalto, a nobleman highly respected by his country and beloved by his monarch. His son walked in those paths of rectitude and honor in which his father had already trod; few indeed were there that did not love him; few who did not bless the hour that gave Lorenzo to the world.

Nature had been prodigal in her favors to him; his form was as graceful as his mind, and in his face were those beauties which would have graced the statue of an Apollo or a Ganymede. Of his courage a sufficient proof has been given in the preceding pages; and perhaps

Sicily could not produce a more accomplished man than himself.

When he left the enraged Conte Angelo he struck across the heath, and reaching a small hamlet passed the night there, intending as soon as the morning dawned to visit the convent, which he doubted not the Signora he had rescued had reached in safety, as the distance she had to travel when she left him was but trifling. Still however fearful that she might have missed her path, or perhaps be exposed to dangers which her unprotected situation would leave her without the means of avoiding or escaping from, he changed his intention, and desiring his people to remain at the village till he returned, he crossed the heath, and arriving at the convent, had the pleasure

of

of learning that the object of his solicitude was safe within its protecting walls. He then returned back to his people, delighted beyond measure at the events of the night, which had given him an opportunity of rescuing the oppressed.

The party which had been sent in search of Angelina returned without the wished success; they could not even gain the smallest intelligence whither she had directed her flight. They brought away the body of Lupo to the Castello, and the Conte had to mourn not only the loss of Angelina, but also that of his trusty and ready agent in his dark and nefarious plans.

The next morning Angelina was ushered into the presence of the abbess of the

convent.

convent. She briefly related the circumstances which had induced her to seek a refuge within its holy walls till such time as her minority should cease, when the power vested in Conte Angelo would be no more.

The venerable abbess listened to her interesting detail with great attention. "You are not the first, fair daughter," said she, "of the family of Carlentini who has sought protection within these walls from tyrannical oppression. Well do I recollect the unfortunate Theodora de Carlentini, who fled from the power of her unprincipled Lord, who sought her life. Wounded and bleeding she arrived here; and if ever a soul went to Heaven, hers did. Fervently she prayed

the

the Saints te forgive her sinful husband, and in blessing him and her child, the late Marchese, your father, Signora, she expired."

Tears stood in the dim eyes of the abbess as she recalled to her memory the mournful scene; and her sighs were echoed back by Angelina, who well recollected to have often heard her father express in the tender terms of filial affection his deep regret at not being able to learn the fate of his mother.

A silence of some minutes now ensued. Angelina wished not to interrupt it, for her thoughts at that moment were so melancholy that the frequent tears rolled down her cheeks, and her sighs made fragrant the zephyr of morning.

The abbess at length interrupted the mournful silence; she embraced the sorrowing Angelina, and assured her of her protection and friendship. "Here, fair daughter," said she, "you can remain unmolested till you wish to adorn the world with your presence."

A nun now entered the parlour, and informed Angelina that the Signor who had protected her from the Conte was at the gate, and requested to speak to her.

Angelina having mentioned to the abbess her obligations to him, followed the nun, who conducted her to the apartment where he was. Lorenzo started when he beheld her approaching; till then his eyes had never beheld such united perfection.

The gentle Deity of Love for once entered the forbidding walls of a convent, he took from his golden quiver two arrows, with these he pierced the tender panting hearts of Angelina and Lorenzo, then well pleased he spread his little pinions, and sailed on the bosom of the rose-scented zephyr, which wafted him to the Idalian groves.

Both felt the influence of the tender passion, but it was their souls that sought to leave their abodes and be united; no gross particle of sensual ideas entered their minds, which, pure and unsullied, shunned all thoughts repugnant to virtue.

For a few moments they were silent; Angelina, however, at length recovered from the confusion into which she had

been

been thrown by the first emotions of love, and with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes falteringly expressed her gratitude to Lorenzo.

De Montalto surveyed with the gaze of the enthusiast her graceful form, the winning gentleness of her manner, her beauteous features; he conceived himself transported to those abodes where the angelic choirs tune their golden harps in heavenly melody, while listening to the dulcet tones of her voice.

How often did his bosom glow with delight at the recollection that he had rendered a service to so beauteous, so interesting a female; how often did he start with horror at the idea that if he had not succoured her she would perhaps

haps ere then have been the wife of Conte Angelo

" 'Tis I, Signora," said he warmly, in answer to her speech, " who ought for ever to bless my good fortune in having preserved from the base intentions of a villain the fairest model of earthly excellence."

Lorenzo stopped; he feared he had said too much, for the deepest tint of the rose mantled on the cheeks of Angelina. A pause ensued for a few moments, when that lovely maid, without raising her eyes, ventured to ask if the Conte's party had not attacked him.

Concealing the act of bravery he had performed in sparing the life of Angelo

when

when he had him in his power, he gave a general relation of the meeting; adding, that he feared one of the Conte's followers was mortally wounded.

From the description of his person Angelina knew that it must be Lupo; and she sighed to think how unfit was his soul to be disrobed of its mortal coil, and appear before the seat of judgment, to answer the stern interrogatories of an avenging Deity.

On the wings of rapture swiftly passed the fleeting moments, and at length Lorenzo with evident reluctance took his leave, for life he sadly sighing found would be to him a wretched blank, unless passed with Angelina. He requested ere he departed permission to call

again

again at the convent; a request which Angelina could not refuse.

When he was gone Angelina retired to her apartment, where the busy powers of recollection brought to her ideal view the graceful Lorenzo; his words, his actions, the sighs which now and then escaped him, lived in her remembrance. She had passed some time in these ruminations, when she was struck with the impropriety of them. These, thought she, are not the sensations of gratitude, they are caused by a much more potent influence, or else the absence of Lorenzo would not appear so distressing to me. But the signal service he has performed me surely deserves more than common gratitude; and while my bosom still trembles at the recollec-

tion of the danger which through him I have escaped, surely more than common sensations must exist in my heart. What pleasure would it give me again to repeat my thanks to him; it would tend to calm all these emotions, so new, so pleasing, and yet so painful.

Such were the thoughts which existed in the bosom of the beauteous Angelina when her heart first throbbed with the wound occasioned by the shaft of Love. At one moment she feared it was that tender passion, at another hoped it was only gratitude; thus Lorenzo entirely occupied her thoughts, while each moment strengthened the golden fetters of that pure exalted affection which was dawning in her bosom, each moment *lengthened* the chain which began to

wind

wind round her heart, inclosing it in that delicious bondage which, to a bosom of such exquisite sensibility as Angelina possessed, at once was a source both of pleasure and grief. Her nature seemed to have undergone a change. Lorenzo now alone existed in her thoughts; and wherever she turned her eyes, in fancy she beheld his graceful form. She took up a book, and endeavoured to divest her thoughts by reading; but while her eyes wandered over the page, her thoughts were on Lorenzo, and in her ears still sounded the pleasing cadences of his voice.

She at length left the chamber, and walked in the gardens of the convent, which were of considerable extent; but the beauties of Nature could not tranquil

lize the emotions which her bosom now felt, and in order to divert them she sought the society of the Abbess.

Requesting to know the particulars of the escape and death of Theodora she turned the conversation on her; but the Abbess declined conversing on the subject which always made her melancholy.

She however opened a cabinet of polished steel, and taking from thence a small roll of papers, presented them to Angelina.

"These characters," said she, "were traced by her hand while it trembled beneath the emotions of pain and grief. She desired I would send them her husband

when

when she was no more. This I promised to perform, but on inquiry learnt that he was murdered by some of his debauched companions. I then deposited the packet in the place from which you saw me take it, and never have I had courage to touch it till now. There you will doubtless find every circumstance respecting that unfortunate Signora fully related."

Angelina took the papers, and after a short conversation with the Abbess retired to her chamber to peruse them; but her mind was in that perturbed state, that hardly had she cast her eyes over the first lines than she was obliged to lay them aside, for the idea of what the hapless writer must have endured, and the recollection of the words of the Abbess

concerning her, made her unable to peruse them; and her eyes became dim with the frequent tear of commiseration.

Lorenzo long wandered in sight of the walls of the convent which contained the rich jewel that his soul panted to call its own. He envied the walls their fancied felicity in containing the lovely Angelina, whose beauties and mental accomplishments had so greatly fascinated him.

On the verdant margin of a stream which rolled its silver waves within sight of the convent Lorenzo passed the day. Absorbed in thought he heeded not the beams of the sun till declining they laced with streaks of gold the venerable walls of the religious pile. He watched them

as they faded to the view, lost in the gradual approach of twilight. The mists of evening now veiled from his sight the abode of Angelina, till the moon gliding from the covert of a cloud darted through the darksome scene her silver streams of light, and brightly tinted its grey walls.

The cool and refreshing breeze gently curled the surface of the stream; the song of the grove was long past, and a stilly silence reigned around. Lorenzo arose from the flower-decked bank where he had passed so many hours, and almost unconscious of his steps, approached the convent, when a chorus of harmonious voices broke on the silence of the midnight air. It was the nuns chaunting the vespers; the swelling

tones slowly ascended on the breeze, and Lorenzo, delighted, long listened to the sounds which seemed to waft his soul to Heaven. Deep sighs escaped his bosom, and a tear slowly bedewed his cheek as he pensively brought to his memory the love-formed image of Angelina.

At length the voices ceased, and Lorenzo retired to the hamlet where his domestics awaited him. It now verged to morning, and as he had not rested the past night, he threw himself on a couch, and soon after a gentle slumber stole over his eyes bringing with it airy dreams in which in fancy he beheld his Angelina.

He thought he held her in his arms and

resisted for a time the attempts of a being of tremendous form who essayed to tear her from him. Suddenly he found himself alone, and long wandered about in the shades of night distracted with his loss. The gloom now dispersed, and he saw his Angelina pale and dying lay-ing on a couch surrounded by a number of people. With difficulty he forced his way through them, and flew into her arms; when immediately she opened her eyes, the color visited her cheeks, and she instantly arose, and returned his embrace. The scene then was changed; he thought he was standing at an altar by the side of Angelina; he turned round to speak to a priest who was there, but beheld in his stead the Conte Angelo; and when he looked for Angelina, found she was gone.

Here his imagination acted so strongly as to awake him, and he lay ruminating on his extraordinary dream, which he could not help thinking was something more than common; there was a consistency throughout the whole, which made it appear a foreboding vision, and as such he carefully treasured it in his memory.

When Angelina arose in the morning she felt refreshed by the tranquil repose she had enjoyed; she too had beheld Lorenzo in her slumbers, and when she joined in the matin service, gratefully recollected her obligations to him, and while she prayed for his happiness in life, secretly wished it might be connected with her own.

Assured of her safety from the base designs of the Conte Angelo, her mind became more at ease; and perhaps the idea that she should see Lorenzo the next day contributed not a little to her internal composure; and feeling a strong desire to perusc the manuscript of Theodora as soon as she was able, she retired to her chamber, where, while her eyes traced the characters, the deep sigh and frequent tear showed how much her sensibility was excited by them.

The contents were as follows:

The Narrative of Theodora.

" My hand, trembling with my mental as well as corporeal pangs, is almost

unable to guide my pen. Slowly it traces the characters which describe my sufferings. While tears of misery dim my eyes, still, however, when the heart is unconscious of ill the mind has a comfort remaining among the accumulating evils. Such happily is the situation of Theodora: my conscience is unaccusing; in no instance have I acted to merit the smallest reproach, either in the sacred characters of a wife or a mother. Why then, cruel Marchese de Carlentini, why hast thou sought to terminate my existence? But I forbear reproach; my life has been spared long enough to enable me to petition Heaven for thy pardon; and from the inmost recesses of my heart do I forgive thee.

"Could it be possible that the tide of

my

my mortal existence should continue to flow for ages to come, my sensations when I saw Grimaldi enter my prison with the bright instrument of death in his hand, and the determined dark looks which he cast at me, can never be effaced from my recollection.

" His hand, however, trembled, and its point missed my heart. I fell; and Grimaldi rushed from the chamber. In his haste he neglected to fasten the door. Horror-struck and faint as I was with the loss of blood, yet I had sufficient resolution to arise, and endeavour to effect my escape while the ability to do it remained.

" The tender longings of a mother to see her beloved child inspired me with

fortitude. I wish to live for thy sake, my Ricardo, but never more shall I imprint on thy lovely smiling face my kisses, never more shall I fold thee in my arms, for Death is advancing toward me with rapid strides, and his eager eyes, like those of the deadly basilisk, chill the current of life, which now glides feebly in my veins.

" I left the apartment soon after Grimaldi had fled from it. I could hear the echo of his paces across the Southern Hall. Terror seemed to attend him; perhaps he thought my disembodied spirit would appear before him, or that some soul-appalling form would punish him for his guilty deeds.

" Unseen I traversed the passages of

the Castello; no door opposed my progress, for Grimaldi staid not to close them. I listened ere I entered the North Hall, but all was silent; I advanced, and at that moment the tall figure of Grimaldi passed me. I was almost sinking on the marble pavement with fear when I saw him turn round and fix his eyes on me.

" Doubtless he conceived it was a visionary form which he saw, for he precipitately retired, and thus freed me from my apprehensions.

" I repaired to the cottage of a peasant and his wife; their terrors were great at seeing me, whom they believed to have long been an inhabitant of the silent tomb. At length I satisfied them

that the life still lingered in my hapless breast; and having purchased their silence respecting what they knew of me, was conveyed by them to the convent of Santa Maria.

" Such were the means by which I effected my escape; but the wound made by Grimaldi's dagger, and the sorrows of my heart, tell me that my Ricardo will be soon without a mother.

" O merciful Creator of the Universe! I beseech thee, if ever the actions of my life were such as were beheld by thee with pleasure, to guard from all evils, and protect the infantine years of my darling child.

" Carlentini! again I repeat that I

do from my soul forgive thee and the unfortunate agent of thy designs against thy affectionate Theodora. Let repentance visit thy bosom, and recollect that there is an hereafter.

" My dissolution approaches—a cold chill creeps through my limbs, and the damps of death are settling on my face—my recollection fails—I hardly know what I have written—But of this be assured, I forgive thee, and shall pray to Heaven with my latest breath to do so to. Dying I subscribe myself, your constant affectionate wife,

" THEODORA DE CARLENTINI."

CHAP. XIV.

ANGELINA dropped the tear of commiseration as she folded up the packet which contained the characters traced by the dying hand of the unfortunate Theodora. The sluices of grief once opened long flowed, for she thought of her departed parents, of her present unmerited wrongs; and perhaps some of the sighs which swelled her bosom might proceed from the remembrances which she tenderly fostered in her breast of the fascinating Lorenzo. Had he been there, it is likely the duration of her sorrow

would

would have been but short; in his converse she would have found a charm that would have dispelled the tear, the sigh, and the melancholy pensive look which now sadly marked her lovely features.

She gazed on the glowing regent of day, while impatience was visible in her countenance; the sun seemed no longer to pursue his daily course, but to rest in his meridian altitude. Nature to Angelina seemed to have paused in all her works, and to have seized on the rapid pinions of Time.

Thus slowly wore away the lengthening hours of the tedious day. Evening then came with all its deepening shades; perched on the lofty branches of the grove the nightingale tuned her amorous

descant,

descant, lulling the feathered race to sweet repose. The mystic lamp of night now rose brightly on the sable scene from the waving summit of the woods which grew on the eastern hills; the prominent features of creation and the walls of the convent were decked with her silvery tints, and her beams trembled on the glassy surface of the stream that gently glided on its devious course.

Night had now reigned some time over her silent empire, and her cool breath warned Angelina to quit the casement, where she had stood to contemplate the lovely scenes of sleeping Nature, when suddenly the soft tones of a lute floated in the air, accompanied by a voice.

The

The sounds of the lute were sweet and delightful; and produced by the finger of harmony, but the voice was to Angelina far more sweet, for it was the voice of Lorenzo.

She feared to breathe, lest she might disturb the wind that conveyed to her ear the loved cadences of his voice, and long did she endeavour, but in vain, to discover where sat the nocturnal harmonist.

At length the air was no longer impregnated with the dulcet melody, and Angelina, closing the casement, courted repose on her couch; and her slumbers giving birth to the airy visions of fancy, she listened in imagination to the strains of Lorenzo.

She arose early the next morning, and as she disposed with more than ordinary attention the luxuriant ringlets which sported on her bosom, the blush of expectation mantled on her lovely cheeks, and her heart fluttered with the emotions caused by the gentle Deity of Love.

When Lorenzo's arrival was announced, a still deeper crimson tinged her downy features. How was her countenance animated with the radiant glow of hope, while all the soft ideas of his soul beamed through his eyes.

The gentle spirits of love and sympathy, who inspire all the soft affections, who instil in the minds of mortals all that is beautiful in feeling and elevated in thought, who awake such thrilling harmony

harmony from that sweet instrument the soul, alone are able to tell what fine, what exquisitely fine cement unites congenial natures, what magnetic principles operate on them.

The day was far advanced ere Lorenzo could prevail on himself to quit the fascinating converse of Angelina; he at length departed, having first obtained permission from that lovely female to renew his visit.

Meantime Conte Angelo was informed by the people he had employed for that purpose of the retreat of his intended victim, and he immediately repaired to the convent, and demanded of the Abbess that she would give up Angelina, alledging as his right for such request

the

the responsible situation of guardian, in which he was placed by virtue of her father's will.

The abbess listened somewhat impatiently to his well-framed discourse, and then signified her determination not to comply with his wishes, as his conduct toward his ward had been influenced by the most unwarrantable designs against her person and fortune.

The Conte, seeing that whatever he could say was of no effect, determined on another method of getting the unfortunate Angelina again in his power; he sent father Hildargo to the Pope's Legate in order to represent to his holiness that the abbess of the convent of Santa Maria forcibly detained Signora Angelina,

lina, his ward, who had before the altar given her free consent to be united to him; but that influenced by the arts of the abbess and a certain cavalier, she had left the Castello de Carlentini in company with him, and had taken her abode at the convent, where the abbess allowed the cavalier to visit her.

This specious tale delivered to the Legate by Hildargo, who solemly asserted the truth of it, had the desired effect; and he was immediately invested with powers to demand the Signora Angelina.

Exulting in his success, the Conte Angelo appeared before the gates of the convent, attended by father Hildargo and a train of domestics, to conduct the hapless Signora back to her Castello.

No

No sooner did she receive from the abbess intimation of the arrival of the Conte, and the authority with which he was invested, than she threw herself at her feet, and with many tears besought her not to deliver her up to his power. Affected at her tears, though the abbess did not dare disobey the order, yet she determined to oblige the Conte to make a solemn promise not to use any force in order to carry into effect his plans respecting Angelina; and to this end she sent to desire his attendance in the parlour of the convent, whither she repaired herself.

When the Conte entered, she thus addressed him:—

"The order you have produced concerning

cerning the lady Angelina I cannot but suppose was gained by artifice, and by unjust representations. That Signora has related to me the whole of your treatment to her, which was the reason of her flying to the protection of this convent; you must therefore, Conte, before I can give her up to you, solemnly promise not to confine her, or bias her inclinations. This if you do not instantly do, I shall, notwithstanding the Legate's order, hold myself justified in protecting her from your persecutions."

The firm and determined manner in which the abbess spoke these words convinced the Conte that he had no other resource than to make the promise she required, for he trembled lest the Legate should be informed of the truth of

his

his conduct to the Signora, and allow her the sure protection if the church, which would entirely baffle all his deep designs.

Without any apparent hesitation he conducted himself according to her wishes, and took the oath required, which was administered to him by the Confessor of the convent, in the presence of the abbess and some of the elder sisters. She then proceeded to the trembling Angelina, and informing her what had passed endeavoured to comfort her under the pressure of the distressful moment

The thought that in the Castello she should not be able to see the fascinating Lorenzo was not the least of Angelina's affliction; and in leaving the convent

she

she felt that she left a place which was endeared to her by the remembrance of the happy moments she had passed in it when listening to his interesting and animated converse.

She now followed the abbess into the parlor, where the Conte with much apparent respect expressed his sorrow for the past, and repeated his promise that the future should behold her perfect mistress of her actions.

Angelina wished to believe his words founded in sincerity, and began to entertain hopes from his public professions that he would no longer attempt to persecute her with his addresses; now rendered, if possible, a thousand times

more odious by the pleasing recollection of Lorenzo.

The thoughts of parting with him caused the frequent sigh; and she conceived that in acquainting him with the reasons of her leaving the convent, and also with the lasting sense she entertained of the services he had performed for her, she did not overstep the bounds of propriety. Hastily, therefore, she penned a few lines expressive of her thoughts, and then tremblingly prepared to accompany the Conte Angelo.

His conduct was as polite and respectful as when he first arrived to take on him the authority with which the will of the late Marchese de Carlentini invested him. With repect to Angelina

and

and her estates, she was allowed her liberty in every respect, and he seemed willing to atone for his former outrages by his present attentions.

The deep-plotting Conte by these means succeeded in lulling to sleep her fears, while he was watching for a fit opportunity both to revenge himself of Lorenzo de Montalto, and to secure to himself the hand and fortunes of the lovely Angelina.

The grief of Lorenzo when in perusing the billet left for him at the convent he learnt that the sweet angel of his affections was once more in the power of the Conte was great indeed, since he knew too much of the Conte's character to suppose that he had given up his designs

respecting her. He immediately resolved to keep a wary eye on his conduct; a matter of some difficulty, as he was confident that Angelo, could he once get him in his power, would amply be revenged for the part he had taken in defeating him, and rescuing Angelina.

All difficulties vanish before the eye of the lover; he bent his steps toward the Castello de Carlentini, whose walls contained the beloved of his heart; and to his delighted gaze, as he surveyed the lofty towers and frowning battlements, appeared the fair form of his love seated at a casement.

The mists of evening had began to condense on the earth ere Lorenzo had approached the Castle; but his eyes, irradiated

irradiated with the fire of love, pierced through their dusky shades, and he contemplated with delight the adored form of Angelina.

She too saw him, and trembled for his safety. Silently she waved her white arm, and motioned him to quit the place. Lorenzo understood her meaning, and retired from the walls. Winding round the broad base of the turret, a small postern attracted his attention; it was beneath that part where, from her being seated at the casement, he concluded Angelina resided. He looked around him for some time, when no person meeting his view, he approached the postern, and perceived that the key was in the lock. Carefully he forced back the rusty bolts, which shot deep into the

massy stone-work, and pushed the postern open. All was dark within; he entered, and by the dim light which slowly proceeded from the open door found himself in a narrow passage.

Though undetermined whether to proceed or not, still he moved forward till his feet struck against some steps. Darkness reigned around, and he did not think it prudent to ascend them, he therefore contented himself with returning to the postern and securing the key of it, since he doubted not but the passage had a communication with the apartments of Angelina, and that in consequence the key might at some future period be of use; then casting a long lingering look toward the Castello, he bent his steps toward his present residence.

Some

Some days now passed, and Conte Angelo perceiving that the mind of Angelina had recovered its natural serenity, endeavoured to carry into effect his deep-concerted plans, which were the constant employment of his thought and conversation with Hildargo. He was determined that in his next attempt no consideration should prevent him from being united at the altar to his beauteous victim, for in friar Hildargo he had an agent who would not scruple to perform the blackest acts.

Recent events made it still necessary to act in a reserved and cautious manner, as he doubted not that he had the eyes of many on him, and particularly those of Lorenzo de Montalto, who he since had learnt was the name of her champion.

Black revenge had fixed its deadly root deep in the bosom of Angelo; and whenever he thought of Lorenzo a pallid hue sat on his features, his lips quivered, and his eyes rolled with the distempered thoughts of his soul. At such times the hilt of his sword was firmly grasped, and he felt eager to plunge the shining steel into his bosom, but he shrunk from the idea of the equal contest, and wished to perform the deadly deed either when the night had rolled its sable mists over the earth, or that sleep had sealed up the eyes of his unsuspecting victim. Such was the character of Angelo. No generous sentiment fired his breast, where lurked dissimulation, pride, envy, and every dastard, base-born idea.

He was musing on the best means of

effecting

effecting the dark intents of his soul one evening, while leaning over the battlements of the Castello. Night in her sable empire was gloomily advancing, when the eyes of Angelo were attracted by the figure of a man gliding under the walls. He looked at him with some attention, and as he passed beneath the place where he stood, recognized the person of Lorenzo; he started from the place, and hastening to the hall, ordered some of his own domestics to follow him well armed, and then leaving the Castello, proceeded with them in the direction that Lorenzo had taken

The Conte proceeded along the base of the walls for some time, till arriving at the postern beneath the Eastern Tower he found that it was open. Immediately

 conjec-

conjecturing that Lorenzo had entered there to see Angelina, his bosom boiled with rage, and as he cautiously listened, he heard the steps of his hated adversary. Fearful of encountering his conquering arm, he sent forward his domestics, who after some difficulty succeeded; aided as they were by the darkness of the place, Lorenzo in vain exerted his strength and courage.

Disarmed and in chains he was brought before Conte Angelo, who, in order to give his proceedings a show of justice, had returned to the North Hall, where he had seated himself in a chair of state, with the friar Hildargo by his side, and attended by the principal officers of the Castello.

"Who art thou," said he in a haughty voice, "who hast dared to attempt an entrance into the Castello at this dark and silent hour? and what were thy intents?"

"Conte Angelo," replied Lorenzo in an undaunted tone, "may, 'tis like, recollect that he owes his life to the lenity of this arm, when he attempted to act basely and dishonourably; and 'twas with a view to learn whether he had attended to his oath that Lorenzo de Montalto entered the Castello de Carlentini. Thou hast thy answer."

"Insolent intruder!" roared the Conte in a voice rendered almost inarticulate with rage, "thou shalt rue thy contemptuous conduct. Away with him,"

continued he to the people, "away with that fellow to the deepest, darkest dungeon of the Castello."

"Base, unmanly wretch!" said Lorenzo, "let me be free, restore me my sword, and then see if thou wouldst dare to utter a reproachful word, or to look on me for a moment."

"'Tis not likely," replied Angelo, "that I should put myself on an equality with a midnight robber, who has assumed a name in order to escape the punishment he merits. But why do I hold further converse with such a character? Lead him to the dungeon."

Lorenzo disdained to reply, and followed the attendants, first casting a look

of the highest contempt and disdain on the Conte Angelo, who evidently shrunk fearful from it, and retired with Hildargo from the hall.

Lorenzo meanwhile was conducted to one of the prisons which were constructed in the frowning walls of the ramparts. A small grating which opened into a court admitted air and light, and the unfortunate Montalto became its gloomy resident.

His own sufferings were almost unthought of, while he considered the helpless situation of his adored Angelina; for the black traits of the Conte's character were too evident; and he doubted not but that he would instantly, unmindful

of his oath, force her, now unprotected, to yield to his infernal schemes.

Such were the melancholy ruminations of Lorenzo, while the Conte, shut up with Hildargo, held a long consultation as to what would be the best mode of carrying his schemes into effect.

Lorenzo he had got into his power, and in such a manner as gave a colour to his harsh proceedings, he therefore was no longer an object of fear.

The next morning, as Angelina was preparing to walk in the extensive gardens of the Castello, Annetta rushed almost breathless into the chamber, and her countenance was pale and agitated.

"Good

"Good Heavens!" said Angelina, starting, "what is the matter, Annetta?"

"O my dear lady! the cavalier, the Signor Lorenzo."

"What of him?" said Angelina, turning as pale as her attendant.

"Oh! Carlo says that the Conte will murder him."

"Murder him!" faintly replied Angelina. "I beseech you to explain yourself. What is the tale of horror you are charged with?"

"Why, my lady," replied the trembling attendant, "as I was crossing the North Hall I met Carlo. We were both

brought

brought up together, my lady, and Carlo—Carlo is—is always glad to see me, my lady."

"Well, well," said Angelino impatiently, "go on."

"Yes, my lady, I will; but I must tell it all in my own way. So says Carlo, 'Ah, Annetta, is that you? I have some news to tell you.' Ah, said I, you are always making me laugh, Carlo. 'No,' said he, 'what I am going to acquaint you with will not make you or your lady laugh.' Indeed! said I, what is it, dear Carlo! I said *dear*, my lady, to induce him to tell me."

"Good Heavens, Annetta, you are *insupportable*," said Angelina.

"Well,

" Well, my lady, now I am come to the story. ' Well, what do you think?' said Carlo, who was quite grave. ' Late last night the Signor Lorenzo was found in the Castello by the Conte, and he is now loaded with chains, and confined in one of the prison chambers.' "

Angelina heard no more; but sunk on the ground, insensible to her misery, and Annetta for a long time in vain endeavoured to restore her to existence.

When at length she recovered, she asked Annetta what further conversation had passed between her and Carlo.

" Why, my lady, to be sure I was indeed sorry about the Signor, because he was so handsome, and fought so bravely

for

for you; so I said to Carlo, and do you think that the Conte will hurt him? 'Hush!' said Carlo, looking round, 'walls have ears; don't speak so loud. From what I heard last night,' said he softly, 'I am afraid it will go hard with him,' So I staid no longer, my lady, but hastened to acquaint you with the sad story."

The senses of Angelina were involved in a stupor of grief; her tears quickly followed each other down her pale cheeks. The dangerous situation of Lorenzo had awakened all the agonizing sensations which her bosom, full of love for him, could feel. Annetta said all she could to comfort her, but to no purpose. At length, however, a thought seemed to have arisen in her breast, which, by in-

spiring

spiring it with hope, made her somewhat composed; and this was to see Carlo, who, being the lover of Annetta, she thought might be prevailed on, in hopes of a future reward, to attempt the dangerous undertaking of restoring to liberty Lorenzo de Montalto, whose existence and happiness Angelina now found was far dearer to her than her own. She then desired Annetta to seek Carlo, and tell him to attend her immediately.

Annetta flew to obey the commands of her lady; and having communicated to Carlo her wish to see him, added thereto her own conjectures concerning what it was her mistress wanted to speak to him about. Carlo, though somewhat alarmed at hazarding the Conte's anger, yet being requested by Annetta, whom he had

had long loved, did not hesitate to accompany her to Angelina's apartments, before whom he bowed low, while he begged to know her commands.

"Carlo," said Angelina, "your love for Annetta I have long been acquainted with, and I will give my consent to your union, and a handsome present to you both on the day of your marriage, on one condition."

Carlo and Annetta blushed; she fixed her eyes impatiently on him while Angelina proceeded:—

"You know the situation of the Signor Lorenzo; you know that he was my preserver at the hazard of his own life. Common gratitude obliges me to exert

myself

myself for his present safety, which if you can secure by opening the doors of his prison, the heiress of Carlentini will make you independent."

"Signora," said Carlo, "if my ability was as great as my inclination to serve you, the Signor would soon be at liberty. I will, however, do all in my power. At midnight it will, I believe, be my turn to guard his prison, and if I have an opportunity to release him, I will do it; but, lady, I must leave the Castello, or well you know to-morrow will not see me alive"

"The Signor Lorenzo will doubtless protect his preserver," replied Angelina; "and the moment you are settled Annetta shall be yours. Meanwhile these

jewels,"

jewels," she continued, presenting him with some, " will secure you against want."

The honest Carlo for a long time refused the valuable present, but Angelina at length prevailed, and she dismissed him in the fond hope that he would succeed in his important undertaking.

The morning was now far spent; the sun had long declined from his meridian altitude, and soon the gay scenes of mid-day splendor grew dim to the view; his last beams now faintly tinged the western horizon, till at length the clouds again resumed their fleecy hue, and the sober mantle of evening hung on the distant hills.

Angelina was too much absorbed in melancholy to meet the Conte at the hour of repast; she had sent an excuse to him, which served still more to irritate him against Lorenzo, who he determined should not long be his rival, for he easily perceived that she had been informed of the situation of that Signor, and which had so much affiicted her as to render her unable to attend the banquet.

Angelina passed some time in her oratory; on her knees she prayed for the success of her endeavours to release Lorenzo from the power of the Conte. Her eyes were suffused in tears as she raised them toward the bright abodes of the celestial host; but hope soon dried up the sources of grief, and Angelina arose from her suppliant posture, relieved from

the pressure of her sorrows in proportion as her confidence in the All-powerful increased.

Some time remained ere the Castle bell would sound the long-tolling hour of midnight; and in order to divert the tedious moments Angelina took up a volume of old tales, having first sent Annetta to watch at a casement which looked into the inner Court, in order to bring the earliest intelligence of the success of Carlo. Meantime turning over the leaves of the book, her attention was caught by the following Fragment:—

THEODORA AND CELESTINA,

A FRAGMENT.

Chill blew the blast of night; it whistled through the umbrageous tenants of the forest; it howled through the cavems; it roared over the mountain; it raised the rough billows of the ocean, and dashed them against the sounding rocks of Calabria's shores: the white foam of the sea sailed on the blast; the Demon of Storms rode well pleased in the midst, or sported on the curled ridges of the black waves. Now deep sunk between two aqueous mountains, now elevated on the summit of a wave, appeared a bark. She bent before the rushing gale, her sails were torn and fluttering in the air, her cordage was broken, and her mast nearly destroyed. Impel-

led by the waves, and urged by the wind, she approached the Black Rocks.

Pale were the faces of the voyagers, distended with horror were their eyes. Death sat on the rocks awaiting his prey; they saw him on the sharp crags. The vessel bounded on the shelving shore, the waves rushed over her, she rolled from side to side; at last her timbers floated wide on the ridgy bosom of the deep, a dreaful cry was borne on the rushing blast.

No noise, save that of the storm, was heard: the flashes of electrie fire from the low-hung clouds gleamed at times through the murky gloom, while the loud pealing thunder awoke the echoes of the caves. At length the morning came.

came. Sullenly the dark vapours retired; the grey mist grew thin, a streak of crimson dye faintly glimmered in the east; the mist, the surcumbent fogs that hung over the vallies, faded away, when the sun beheld them from the chariot of day as he urged on his immortal courers.

Worn with the weight of years, slowly advanced from his lonely cave an aged hermit. He paced the boundary of the ocean, and sighing veiwed the ravages of the storms; he started; the body of a female lay before him, pale, lifeless; drenched with the briny wave. He raised it up, and exerting the feeble remains of the vigour of other days, brought it to his cell; there he laid it on his humble pallet, and long endeavoured to call back the warm tide of life.

The female at length opened her mild blue eyes. The suspended powers of recollection slowly returned; she gazed wildly around the rocky sides of her present abode; and the venerable preserver of her life, whose silver beard descended to his girdle, at times caught her attention.

"Where," said she at length, "where has fate cast the miserable Celestina? Old man, tell me, I beseech you, where too are the companions of my voyage? In thy countenance, stranger, dwells the semblance of truth; unfold to me the tale."

"Lady," said the full of years, "my eyes did not seek for thy friends; the cold winds blew; my frame trembles

with

with age, and I hesitated not a moment in performing toward thee the offices of humanity. Compose your spirits; I will direct my steps to the shores of the ocean."

This said, resting on his staff he tottered to the rocky boundary of the coast; he looked around; his eyes dim with age could just distinguish vast fragments of the wreck trembling on the heaving billows, but no human being did he see; no sound of mortal voice reached his ear; silent and sad he returned and stood before his agitated guest.

"In the womb of the ocean lie thy friends. To thee Providence has been kind; be grateful for his favors, nor pass thy hours in unavailing lamentations."

Wildly the female shrieked; her grief stole away her languid senses, and she fell on the ground, like the lily cut down by the careless sickle of the reaper.

Skilled in the knowledge of the various properties of herbs, the recluse hastily prepared a reviving medicine, which he poured into her mouth, and Celestina awoke from the torpor into which her grief had enwrapt her senses.

"Daughter," said the ancient man, "repine not at the inscrutable decrees of Providence, who heaps on us no more than he enables us to bear."

But the words of the sage to the distracted Celestina were like the wind among the reeds of the lake; they bend

to the breeze, but the moment it is gone they raise their heads.

She heard his sayings, and listened to the matured advice of the collected experience of years; but her despair was the same. She smote her bosom, tore her lovely tresses that rivalled the feathers of the raven, bedewed her pallid cheeks with the scalding flood of sorrow, while in distracted accents she exclaimed: "My Theodore, then, is gone. No more shall I view his manly charms. The relentless waves of the ocean roll over his loved form; or perhaps, cast on some deserted coast, it lays to moulder in the scorching sun-beam. But I will seek it from the summit of some tall rock; I will behold the bed of the ocean, I will see if his grave be there; or if the

shore bears his pale corse, I will entomb it in my arms."

Wildly she rushed out of the cave; the recluse sadly followed her steps, but he soon beheld her far before him, and the mist that dimmed his aged eyes obscured her from his view.

Clinging to a plank, a hapless sufferer, when the black waves tore asunder the beams of the vessel. One while an immense wave buried him in its briny bosom; another moment beheld him on the summit of a foaming ridge of the tempestuous element. As man naturally clings to life, so clung to the plank, his only hope, the unfortunate man. All was dark; the dreadful storm was thickly

clad

clad in sable horrors; at times the gleaming lightenings that made visible the tenebrous shades swiftly darted along the black tumbling waters, whose curled summit trembled at the peals of thunder which burst from the bosom of the low-hung clouds.

A long rolling wave advanced; the strong body of water, impelled by the violent gale, separated the unfortunate from the plank; forward it drove him with resistless force; it dashed him on a rock, and instantly receding, left him on it; he crawled slowly up the craggy side, and when the waves returned, held fast for fear of being washed into the deep.

The grey mists of morning beheld him fearfully

fearfully hanging on the rocks, his body bruized, and his strength decreasing: below him rolled the dark waves.

Other thoughts besides his dangerous situation occupied his mind; a lovely maid was the precious freightage of the faithless vessel; his soul adored her, his heart was hers; she gave him her own in return. Sweet interchange! How bitter were now his thoughts.

It was Celestina whose death he lamented; and he was that Theodore whom Celestina grieved for; but no pitying angel was at hand to save two faithful lovers from black despair.

The morning came with its faint beams; Theodore still clung to the rock, but

but the animating powers of life were receding; his arms trembled; he could no longer retain his hold. Sighing out the name of Celestina he fell into the waves below. The rushing waters drove out his soul.

Celestina, the miserable Celestina, as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her, approached the rocks that hung over the ocean. She ascended their rugged steeps. The storm had partly subsided; the waves began to resume their cœrulean colour, and the dark sand raised by the furious blasts sunk to the bed of the ocean.

Celestina gazed on the wide bosom of the waters; she looked on the dark rocks,

but

but no Theodore met her view. Tearless were her eyes; her lovely locks streamed in the wind.

Thrice she called on the name of Theodore, and thrice did Echo return the silver tones of her voice; but the voice of Theodore answered not.

She gazed on the waves below; she hung over the foaming precipice; she started, for plainly she beheld the waves rolling thinly over the body of her lover. Stedfastly for a time she surveyed the soul-harrowing sight, then she looked on the heavens with a rapturous gaze, a heavenly smile illumined her countenance.

"The soul of my Theodore," said she,

"is

" is now winging its rapid flight through the vast aerial expanse to regions of celestial joys. Wait a few short moments, beloved of my heart, and thy Celestina will bear thee company."

This said, she loosed her hold of the rock, and precipitated herself into the ocean: the waters divided over the body of Theodore, and she closed her lovely eyes for ever by the side of his pale corse.

At a distance the recluse sadly saw the deed of death. He waited till the tide had rolled the waves to other shores. He found the lovers of the pebly beech; he viewed their inanimate remains with lively sensations of gratitude, while the

tear

tear of commiseration rolled down the furrows of his aged cheeks.

"Death, sweet pair," said he, shall not divide you; one grave shall contain ye who had but one heart. These aged hands shall construct your simple tomb; the turf which covers you shall be moistened by my tears; sweet flowers shall unfold their varied beauties, and shed their fragrance round your silent abode; and when my soul, that is now lingering on the brink of eternity, meets yours in regions of joy, ye will thank me for this last act of friendship."

Mournfully the ancient solitary man began the fatiguing employment. Under the shade of a rock he raised the turf inclosure;

inclosure; in it he placed, side by side, the remains of the fond pair. He knelt down, and offered up a fervent petition to Heaven for the repose of their souls. The Angel of Death saw him; his moments were numbered; he sunk down, opprest with the immortalizing pangs of dissolution, and the tomb he had formed for the hapless Theodore and Celestina became also his own.

Her own sad situation, and the melancholy inspired by this pathetic tale, overcame the sorrowful Angelina. She dropt the volume, and deeply sighing, paid the tribute of a tear to the memory of Theodore and Celestina.

Her sorrowful ruminations were, however

ever soon changed into sensations of terror, for she plainly heard the paces of some people along the corridore that led to her apartments. Presently after the Conte Angelo entered, and closing the door after him, advanced toward the fear-struck Angelina, who trembled lest her attempt to liberate the Signor Lorenzo were discovered, and that he came to upbraid her with the part she had acted, and to put his former designs into execution.

END OF VOL. III.

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